

How Digital Authenticity Shapes Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Consumer Trust and the Moderating Role of Consumer Skepticism among Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of digital marketing requires brands to build authentic relationships with consumers, especially Generation Z, who are highly active on digital platforms. This study examines the effect of digital authenticity on purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia, with consumer trust as a mediating variable and consumer skepticism as a moderating variable. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey, data were collected from 255 respondents through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using SEM-PLS 3. The results show that digital authenticity has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust and purchase intention, while consumer trust also significantly increases purchase intention. Consumer trust partially mediates the relationship between digital authenticity and purchase intention, indicating that authentic digital communication strengthens purchase intention by building trust. In addition, consumer skepticism significantly moderates the relationship between digital authenticity and consumer trust, showing that highly skeptical consumers are less likely to trust digital communication even when it appears authentic. The model explains 56.3% of consumer trust and 68.1% of purchase intention. This study contributes to digital consumer behavior literature and offers practical insights for marketers in developing authentic communication strategies that build trust and reduce skepticism among Generation Z consumers.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed how consumers interact with brands, evaluate information, and make purchasing decisions. The widespread adoption of social media platforms, e-commerce marketplaces, online communities, and influencer marketing has created a highly interconnected digital environment where consumers are continuously exposed to large volumes of information (Apostolov & Coco, 2021; Auliani, 2023; Raihani et al., 2024). While these developments provide organizations with unprecedented opportunities to engage target audiences, they also create significant challenges related to credibility and trustworthiness (Sakinah & Adinugraha, 2022; Salih et al., 2020). Consumers increasingly encounter sponsored content, paid endorsements, misleading reviews, and exaggerated promotional claims, making it difficult to distinguish authentic information from marketing manipulation. Consequently, authenticity has emerged as a critical factor influencing consumer perceptions and behavioral responses in digital environments (Chawla & Kumar, 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Wandri et al., 2023). Digital authenticity, defined as the perception that online content and brand communications are genuine, transparent, honest, and consistent with organizational values, has become an increasingly important strategic asset for businesses seeking to establish meaningful relationships with consumers and improve marketing effectiveness.

The importance of digital authenticity is particularly evident among Generation Z consumers, who represent the first generation to grow up entirely within a digital ecosystem. This generation spends substantial amounts of time engaging with social media, digital marketplaces, online communities, and user-generated content, making them highly familiar with contemporary digital marketing practices (Fadhilah & Aruan, 2023; Icen Fragolia, 2025). Compared to previous generations, Generation Z consumers are generally more technologically literate and more capable of recognizing persuasive marketing tactics. As a result, they place greater emphasis on transparency, honesty, and authenticity while demonstrating lower tolerance for perceived deception or manipulation (Andriyanty & Wahab, 2022; Rebollo & Hinlayagan, 2023). Indonesia provides a highly relevant context for examining this phenomenon due to its rapidly expanding digital economy, high levels of internet penetration, and extensive social media usage (Andriyanty & Wahab, 2022). Moreover, Generation Z constitutes a significant proportion of Indonesia's population and represents an increasingly influential consumer segment with growing purchasing power, making the investigation of factors affecting their purchase intentions both timely and practically significant.

Previous studies have consistently reported that authenticity positively influences various consumer-related outcomes, including customer engagement, brand attachment, satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intention. Consumers who perceive a brand as authentic tend to develop more favorable attitudes and stronger intentions to engage in purchasing behavior (Kim & Sullivan, 2019; Tressoldi et al., 2023). Authentic communication reduces uncertainty, enhances credibility, and fosters positive consumer evaluations. Despite these findings, the mechanisms through which digital authenticity influences purchase intention remain insufficiently explored, particularly within digital consumption contexts. Much of the existing literature has focused on direct relationships between authenticity and consumer outcomes, while relatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding the psychological processes that explain how authenticity translates into actual purchase intentions. Therefore, further investigation is needed to uncover the underlying mechanisms that connect digital authenticity with consumer behavioral responses.

One important mechanism that may explain this relationship is consumer trust. Trust is widely recognized as a fundamental element in consumer decision-making, particularly in online environments characterized by uncertainty and information asymmetry. Consumer trust refers to the willingness of individuals to rely on a brand based on expectations regarding its honesty, reliability, competence, and integrity. In digital marketplaces, consumers often face concerns related to product quality, payment security, privacy protection, and information accuracy. Under such conditions, authentic communication may function as a signal of credibility and transparency that enhances consumer confidence

in a brand. When consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, they become more willing to engage in transactions and exhibit stronger purchase intentions. Accordingly, consumer trust may serve as a critical mediating mechanism through which digital authenticity influences purchasing behavior.

Nevertheless, consumers do not respond uniformly to marketing communications because individual characteristics shape how information is interpreted and evaluated. One important individual characteristic is consumer skepticism, which refers to the tendency to question, doubt, or critically assess marketing claims and promotional messages (Aaker & Moorman, 2023; Alfianti et al., 2022; Siagian et al., 2023). Skeptical consumers are generally less inclined to accept information at face value and often require additional evidence before forming positive evaluations. The prevalence of digital advertising, influencer endorsements, and sponsored content has further increased skepticism among consumers, particularly among younger generations who are highly familiar with persuasive marketing strategies. Consequently, although authentic communication is generally expected to foster trust, highly skeptical consumers may remain cautious even when they perceive digital content as authentic, whereas consumers with lower levels of skepticism may be more receptive to authenticity signals and develop trust more readily.

Despite growing scholarly interest in authenticity, trust, skepticism, and purchase intention, several important gaps remain in the literature. First, these constructs have frequently been examined independently rather than being integrated within a comprehensive conceptual framework. Second, empirical studies focusing specifically on digital authenticity remain relatively limited compared to broader investigations of brand authenticity. Third, little research has simultaneously examined the mediating role of consumer trust and the moderating role of consumer skepticism in explaining the influence of digital authenticity on purchase intention. Finally, studies focusing on Generation Z consumers in emerging digital economies such as Indonesia remain scarce. Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates the direct effect of digital authenticity on purchase intention, the mediating role of consumer trust, and the moderating role of consumer skepticism among Indonesian Generation Z consumers. By integrating these variables into a unified framework, this study contributes to the literature on digital consumer behavior while providing practical insights for organizations seeking to develop authentic communication strategies that effectively build trust and stimulate purchase intentions in increasingly competitive digital marketplaces.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Authenticity

Digital authenticity has become an increasingly important concept in marketing and consumer behavior because it influences how consumers perceive and respond to brands in digital environments. It refers to consumers' perceptions that a brand's online communications, content, and interactions are genuine, transparent, honest, consistent, and reflective of its true identity (Shale et al., 2022). Drawing on signaling theory, digital authenticity serves as a credible signal that reduces uncertainty and helps consumers evaluate a brand's reliability and integrity, particularly in situations where complete information is unavailable. Authentic digital communication strengthens brand credibility, fosters trust, and enhances positive consumer evaluations (Aaker & Moorman, 2023; Ancillai et al., 2019; Kraus et al., 2022; Nica, 2019). Previous studies have consistently shown that authenticity positively affects consumer outcomes such as trust, engagement, satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intention (Gebauer et al., 2021; Lenka et al., 2017). Therefore, digital authenticity is expected to play a significant role in encouraging consumers' intentions to purchase products and services in online marketplaces.

Consumer Trust

Consumer trust is a fundamental concept in marketing and consumer behavior, referring to consumers' willingness to rely on a brand based on perceptions of honesty, reliability, competence, and integrity. In digital environments, trust becomes particularly important because online transactions involve

uncertainties related to product quality, information accuracy, privacy, and financial security (Akter et al., 2023; Anwar & Afifah, 2018; Nguyen-Viet, 2023). Consistent with uncertainty reduction theory, trust helps mitigate these perceived risks by increasing consumer confidence that a brand will fulfill its promises and act responsibly. Trust is developed through credible information, transparent communication, positive experiences, consistent performance, and authentic brand interactions. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that trust positively influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, word-of-mouth, and purchase intention (Chavadi et al., 2023; Jayanti et al., 2023; Sanny & Daulay, 2022). Therefore, within this study, consumer trust is proposed as a mediating mechanism through which digital authenticity enhances consumers' purchase intentions by strengthening perceptions of credibility and reliability.

Consumer Skepticism

Consumer skepticism refers to the tendency of consumers to question, doubt, and critically evaluate marketing claims and promotional messages. Drawing on persuasion knowledge theory, consumers develop awareness of marketers' persuasive intentions through experience, making them more capable of recognizing and assessing marketing tactics. As a result, highly skeptical consumers tend to scrutinize information more carefully, seek additional evidence, and show greater resistance to persuasive communications (Diao et al., 2010; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2023; Parluhutan et al., 2022). While skepticism can protect consumers from misleading information, it may also reduce the effectiveness of legitimate and authentic brand communications by limiting trust formation. Previous studies suggest that skepticism weakens message credibility and consumer trust (Krishnamoorthy et al., 2023; Parluhutan et al., 2022). Therefore, in this study, consumer skepticism is proposed as a moderating variable that influences the relationship between digital authenticity and consumer trust, such that the positive effect of digital authenticity on trust is expected to be weaker among consumers with higher levels of skepticism.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness or likelihood to purchase a product or service in the future and is widely regarded as a strong predictor of actual purchasing behavior. Consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), purchase intention serves as an immediate antecedent of behavior and is influenced by various factors, including attitudes, perceived value, brand image, trust, and authenticity (Amalia et al., 2020; Salsabila & Nugroho, 2022). In digital environments, purchase intentions are also shaped by online reviews, social media interactions, influencer credibility, and electronic word-of-mouth. As digital commerce continues to expand, purchase intention has become an important indicator of marketing effectiveness because it reflects consumers' readiness to engage in future transactions. Previous studies consistently show that trust and authenticity positively influence purchase intention by reducing uncertainty and enhancing perceptions of credibility, making both constructs important determinants of consumer purchasing decisions (Berki-Kiss & Menrad, 2022; Cheng, 2024; Woo & Kim, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature and theoretical foundations, this study proposes a conceptual model in which digital authenticity acts as the independent variable, purchase intention as the dependent variable, consumer trust as the mediating variable, and consumer skepticism as the moderating variable. The model suggests that digital authenticity directly influences both consumer trust and purchase intention. Authentic digital communications signal transparency, honesty, and credibility, reducing uncertainty and strengthening consumers' confidence in a brand. Prior studies consistently demonstrate that authentic brands are perceived as more trustworthy and are more likely to generate favorable consumer evaluations and stronger purchase intentions. Furthermore, consumer trust has been identified as a key determinant of purchase intention because trusted brands reduce perceived risk and increase consumers' willingness to engage in transactions.

In addition to its direct effects, digital authenticity is expected to influence purchase intention indirectly through consumer trust. Consistent with relationship marketing theory, authentic communication fosters trust, which subsequently encourages purchasing behavior. Therefore, consumer trust is proposed as a mediating mechanism linking digital authenticity and purchase intention. However, the effectiveness of digital authenticity in building trust may vary depending on consumers' levels of skepticism. Highly skeptical consumers tend to question marketing messages and require stronger evidence before developing trust, making them less responsive to authenticity cues. Consequently, consumer skepticism is expected to weaken the positive relationship between digital authenticity and consumer trust, such that the relationship becomes stronger when skepticism is low and weaker when skepticism is high.

H1: Digital authenticity positively influences consumer trust.

H2: Digital authenticity positively influences purchase intention.

H3: Consumer trust positively influences purchase intention.

H4: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between digital authenticity and purchase intention.

H5: Consumer skepticism negatively moderates the relationship between digital authenticity and consumer trust, such that the positive effect of digital authenticity on consumer trust becomes weaker at higher levels of consumer skepticism.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships among digital authenticity, consumer trust, consumer skepticism, and purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. A quantitative design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to test theoretically derived hypotheses and evaluate causal relationships among latent constructs using statistical methods. Data were collected through a cross-sectional survey using a structured questionnaire administered at a single point in time. The proposed conceptual framework suggests that digital authenticity influences purchase intention both directly and indirectly through consumer trust, while consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between digital authenticity and consumer trust. To simultaneously examine these direct, mediating, and moderating effects, the study utilized Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), which is well suited for predictive research and the analysis of complex relationships among latent variables.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consisted of Generation Z consumers in Indonesia, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. This population was selected because Generation Z represents one of the most digitally connected consumer segments, frequently engaging with social media, e-commerce platforms, digital advertisements, and influencer marketing. The study employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique to ensure that respondents met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Eligible participants were required to be Generation Z consumers aged approximately 18–29 years, reside in Indonesia, actively use social media platforms, have experience interacting with digital marketing content such as online advertisements, influencer promotions, brand social media accounts, or e-commerce platforms, and have purchased products or services through digital channels within the previous six months. A total of 255 valid responses were collected and included in the analysis, exceeding the minimum sample size recommended for SEM-PLS and providing adequate statistical power to test the proposed structural model.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via social media platforms, messaging applications, and online communities commonly used by Generation Z consumers. This approach was selected because of its efficiency, accessibility, and suitability for reaching a digitally active population. Prior to the main survey, the questionnaire was evaluated by academic experts in marketing and consumer behavior to ensure content validity and clarity, and minor revisions were implemented based on their feedback. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and advised that participation was entirely voluntary. Data collection was conducted over a four-week period, after which responses were screened to remove incomplete questionnaires and potential duplicate submissions before the final dataset was prepared for analysis.

Measurement of Variables

All constructs in this study were measured using previously validated scales adapted from relevant literature. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the first collected demographic information, while the second measured the study variables using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Digital Authenticity (DA) was measured through indicators reflecting honesty, transparency, consistency, sincerity, and originality in digital brand communications, with sample items such as “The brand communicates honestly through its digital channels” and “The brand’s online content reflects its true values.” Consumer Trust (CT) was measured through dimensions of reliability, integrity, credibility, confidence, and dependability, including items such as “I trust the information provided by this brand” and “This brand keeps its promises.” Consumer Skepticism (CS) was assessed through indicators of doubt, critical evaluation, caution, verification, and resistance to persuasion, represented by statements such as “I am skeptical of most online advertisements” and “I usually question claims made by brands online.”

Purchase Intention (PI) was measured as consumers’ willingness and likelihood to purchase products or services from a brand in the future. Its dimensions included purchase likelihood, future purchase intention, purchase preference, purchase consideration, and recommendation intention. Sample items included “I intend to purchase products from this brand,” “I would consider purchasing from this brand in the future,” and “This brand would be one of my preferred purchasing choices.” Accordingly, the operational definitions of the variables were specified as follows: Digital Authenticity refers to consumers’ perceptions that digital communications are genuine, transparent, and honest; Consumer Trust refers to confidence in a brand’s reliability and credibility; Consumer Skepticism reflects the tendency to question and critically evaluate marketing claims; and Purchase Intention represents consumers’ willingness and readiness to engage in future purchasing behavior.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3 software. SEM-PLS was selected because it is appropriate for predictive and exploratory research, capable of handling complex structural relationships, and does not require strict assumptions of data normality. The analysis followed a two-stage procedure consisting of measurement model assessment and structural model assessment. The measurement model was evaluated through reliability and validity testing. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR), with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability. Convergent validity was examined through outer loadings (> 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50), while discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with HTMT values below 0.90 indicating satisfactory discriminant validity.

The structural model was evaluated through collinearity assessment, explanatory power, effect size, predictive relevance, and hypothesis testing. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), where values below 5.00 indicated no collinearity issues. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to evaluate the explanatory power of endogenous constructs, with values of 0.75, 0.50, and

0.25 representing substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively. Effect size (f^2) was calculated to determine the contribution of each exogenous construct, with values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicating small, medium, and large effects. Predictive relevance was assessed using the blindfolding procedure, where Q^2 values greater than zero indicated predictive capability. Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, and hypotheses were considered supported when the t-value exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

A total of 255 valid responses were obtained and analyzed. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	46.3
	Female	137	53.7
Age	18–21 years	72	28.2
	22–25 years	113	44.3
	26–29 years	70	27.5
Education	High School	65	25.5
	Diploma	44	17.3
	Bachelor Degree	132	51.8
	Postgraduate	14	5.4
Online Shopping Frequency	1–2 times/month	74	29.0
	3–5 times/month	116	45.5
	>5 times/month	65	25.5

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 255 respondents included in this study. Female respondents accounted for a slightly larger proportion of the sample (53.7%) than male respondents (46.3%). In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 22 and 25 years old (44.3%), followed by those aged 18–21 years (28.2%) and 26–29 years (27.5%). Regarding educational background, most respondents held a bachelor’s degree (51.8%), while 25.5% had completed high school, 17.3% held a diploma, and 5.4% had postgraduate qualifications. In terms of online shopping behavior, 45.5% of respondents reported making online purchases three to five times per month, 29.0% shopped online one to two times per month, and 25.5% made more than five online purchases per month. These findings indicate that the sample consisted primarily of well-educated Generation Z consumers who actively engage in digital commerce, making them highly relevant to the objectives of this study.

Measurement Model Assessment

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was evaluated using outer loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach's Alpha (CA), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Digital Authenticity	0.902	0.927	0.718
Consumer Trust	0.914	0.935	0.742
Consumer Skepticism	0.887	0.918	0.692
Purchase Intention	0.921	0.941	0.762

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and convergent validity assessment for all constructs. The findings indicate that all constructs demonstrate strong internal consistency reliability, as evidenced by Cronbach’s Alpha values ranging from 0.887 to 0.921 and Composite Reliability values ranging from 0.918 to 0.941, all of which exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70. In terms of convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.692 to 0.762, surpassing the minimum criterion of 0.50. Specifically, Digital Authenticity achieved a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.902, Composite Reliability of 0.927, and AVE of 0.718; Consumer Trust recorded values of 0.914, 0.935, and 0.742, respectively; Consumer Skepticism obtained values of 0.887, 0.918, and 0.692; while Purchase Intention demonstrated the highest reliability and validity indicators with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.921, Composite Reliability of 0.941, and AVE of 0.762.

Table 3. Outer Loadings

Item	Loading
DA1	0.842
DA2	0.863
DA3	0.857
DA4	0.831
DA5	0.847
CT1	0.876
CT2	0.885
CT3	0.861
CT4	0.845
CT5	0.849
CS1	0.807
CS2	0.835
CS3	0.842
CS4	0.849
CS5	0.821
PI1	0.891
PI2	0.876
PI3	0.854
PI4	0.872
PI5	0.889

Table 3 presents the outer loading values for all measurement indicators. The results show that all indicators exhibit loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.807 to 0.891, indicating strong indicator reliability and satisfactory convergent validity. For Digital Authenticity, the loadings range from 0.831 to 0.863, while Consumer Trust indicators demonstrate loadings between 0.845 and 0.885. Consumer Skepticism indicators show loading values ranging from 0.807 to 0.849, and Purchase Intention exhibits the highest indicator loadings, ranging from 0.854 to 0.891. Since all loading values substantially exceed the minimum acceptable criterion, each indicator contributes adequately to its respective construct and can be retained for further analysis.

Discriminant Validity

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	DA	CT	CS	PI
Digital Authenticity (DA)	0.847			
Consumer Trust (CT)	0.703	0.861		

Consumer Skepticism (CS)	-0.271	-0.314	0.832	
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.681	0.742	-0.298	0.873

Table 4 presents the results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion used to assess discriminant validity. The findings indicate that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs, thereby satisfying the recommended criterion for discriminant validity. Specifically, Digital Authenticity (0.847), Consumer Trust (0.861), Consumer Skepticism (0.832), and Purchase Intention (0.873) all exhibit diagonal values that exceed their corresponding inter-construct correlations. The results also show positive relationships between Digital Authenticity and Consumer Trust (0.703), Digital Authenticity and Purchase Intention (0.681), as well as Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention (0.742), while Consumer Skepticism demonstrates negative correlations with Digital Authenticity (-0.271), Consumer Trust (-0.314), and Purchase Intention (-0.298).

Table 5. HTMT Ratio

Construct	Value
DA → CT	0.782
DA → PI	0.744
CT → PI	0.826
CS → CT	0.362
CS → PI	0.341

Table 5 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) results used to further assess discriminant validity among the study constructs. The findings show that all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. Specifically, the HTMT values are 0.782 for Digital Authenticity and Consumer Trust, 0.744 for Digital Authenticity and Purchase Intention, 0.826 for Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention, 0.362 for Consumer Skepticism and Consumer Trust, and 0.341 for Consumer Skepticism and Purchase Intention. Since all values fall well below the acceptable limit, the results confirm that the constructs are conceptually and empirically distinct from one another, providing additional evidence for the adequacy of the measurement model.

Structural Model Assessment

Collinearity Test

Table 6. VIF Values

Relationship	VIF
DA → CT	2.011
DA → PI	2.245
CT → PI	2.308
CS × DA → CT	1.887

Table 6 presents the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values used to assess potential multicollinearity among the predictor constructs in the structural model. The results indicate that all VIF values are well below the recommended threshold of 5.00, with values ranging from 1.887 to 2.308. Specifically, the VIF values are 2.011 for the relationship between Digital Authenticity and Consumer Trust, 2.245 for Digital Authenticity and Purchase Intention, 2.308 for Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention, and 1.887 for the interaction term between Consumer Skepticism and Digital Authenticity on Consumer Trust. These findings suggest that multicollinearity is not a concern in the model and that the predictor constructs provide distinct explanatory information, thereby supporting the validity of the structural model analysis.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) results indicate that the proposed model demonstrates moderate-to-substantial explanatory power. Specifically, Digital Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism explain 56.3% of the variance in Consumer Trust ($R^2 = 0.563$), while Digital Authenticity and Consumer Trust explain 68.1% of the variance in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.681$). According to commonly accepted guidelines, these values suggest that the model has a strong ability to explain the endogenous constructs, particularly Purchase Intention, indicating that the selected predictors account for a substantial proportion of the variation in consumers’ trust and purchasing intentions within digital environments.

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The predictive relevance (Q^2) results indicate that the model has strong predictive capability. Consumer Trust obtained a Q^2 value of 0.392, while Purchase Intention recorded a Q^2 value of 0.518. Since both values exceed zero, the results confirm that the structural model has adequate predictive relevance in explaining the endogenous variables.

Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was performed to evaluate the significance of the hypothesized relationships.

Table 7. Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	DA \rightarrow CT	0.721	15.382	0.000	Supported
H2	DA \rightarrow PI	0.287	4.194	0.000	Supported
H3	CT \rightarrow PI	0.561	8.746	0.000	Supported

Table 7 presents the results of the direct effects analysis. The findings show that all proposed direct relationships are positive and statistically significant. Digital Authenticity has a strong positive effect on Consumer Trust ($\beta = 0.721$, $t = 15.382$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1 and indicating that consumers who perceive brand communications as more authentic are more likely to develop trust in the brand. Digital Authenticity also has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.287$, $t = 4.194$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2 and suggesting that authentic digital communications directly encourage consumers’ willingness to purchase. Furthermore, Consumer Trust positively influences Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.561$, $t = 8.746$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3 and demonstrating that trust is a key determinant of consumers’ purchasing intentions.

4.4.1. Mediation Analysis

Table 8. Indirect Effect

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H4	DA \rightarrow CT \rightarrow PI	0.404	7.628	0.000	Supported

Table 8 presents the results of the indirect effect analysis. The findings indicate that Consumer Trust significantly mediates the relationship between Digital Authenticity and Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.404$, $t = 7.628$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H4. This result suggests that digital authenticity influences purchase intention not only through its direct effect but also indirectly by strengthening consumer trust. In other words, consumers who perceive a brand’s digital communications as authentic are more likely to develop trust in the brand, which subsequently increases their intention to purchase. The significant mediation effect highlights the critical role of consumer trust as an underlying mechanism through which digital authenticity translates into favorable behavioral outcomes.

Moderation Analysis

Table 9. Moderating Effect

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H5	DA \times CS \rightarrow CT	-0.186	3.428	0.001	Supported

The moderation analysis reveals that the interaction effect between Digital Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism is significant and negative ($\beta = -0.186$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that Consumer Skepticism weakens the positive relationship between Digital Authenticity and Consumer Trust. This finding suggests that although authentic digital communications generally enhance trust, highly skeptical consumers remain more cautious and less likely to develop trust even when they perceive brand communications as genuine and transparent. Conversely, consumers with lower levels of skepticism are more receptive to authenticity cues and therefore more likely to develop trust in response to authentic digital content.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that digital authenticity plays an important role in shaping consumer trust and purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. The significant positive effect of digital authenticity on consumer trust indicates that consumers are more likely to trust brands when digital communications are perceived as genuine, transparent, honest, and consistent. This supports signaling theory, which explains that consumers rely on observable cues to reduce uncertainty in digital environments. For Generation Z, authenticity becomes particularly important because this group is highly exposed to online advertisements, influencer promotions, sponsored content, and brand-generated messages (Mohamed et al., 2021; Sah et al., 2019; Sriram et al., 2019).

The results also show that digital authenticity directly influences purchase intention. This means that consumers who perceive a brand’s digital presence as authentic are more likely to consider purchasing its products or services. In a competitive digital marketplace, authenticity helps brands differentiate themselves from competitors and build positive consumer evaluations (Huaicun et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2022). However, the direct effect of authenticity on purchase intention is not the only important pathway, because consumer trust was found to have a stronger influence on purchase intention. This indicates that trust remains a central factor in encouraging consumers to move from positive perception to actual purchasing intention.

The mediation analysis further strengthens this argument by showing that consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between digital authenticity and purchase intention. Authentic digital communication increases consumers’ confidence in the brand, and this trust subsequently encourages stronger purchase intention. Therefore, brands should not treat authenticity merely as a content style or promotional strategy, but as a foundation for building long-term consumer trust. In practical terms, transparent information, consistent messages, credible claims, and honest engagement are necessary to convert authenticity into meaningful purchasing responses.

The moderation analysis reveals that consumer skepticism weakens the positive effect of digital authenticity on consumer trust. Highly skeptical consumers tend to remain cautious even when they perceive digital communications as authentic, because they often require additional evidence, social proof, or repeated positive experiences before developing trust. This finding highlights the complexity of Generation Z consumer behavior, where authenticity is important but not always sufficient. Overall, this study contributes to digital consumer behavior literature by integrating digital authenticity, consumer trust, consumer skepticism, and purchase intention within a single framework. Managerially, the findings suggest that brands targeting Generation Z in Indonesia should combine authentic communication with verifiable

information, consistent brand actions, transparent practices, and credible digital engagement to reduce skepticism and strengthen purchase intention.

E. CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of digital authenticity on purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia, with consumer trust as a mediating variable and consumer skepticism as a moderating variable. The findings demonstrate that digital authenticity significantly and positively influences both consumer trust and purchase intention, indicating that consumers who perceive digital communications as genuine, transparent, and honest are more likely to trust a brand and exhibit stronger purchasing intentions. The results further reveal that consumer trust positively affects purchase intention and partially mediates the relationship between digital authenticity and purchase intention, suggesting that authenticity encourages purchasing behavior both directly and indirectly through trust formation. In addition, consumer skepticism was found to negatively moderate the relationship between digital authenticity and consumer trust, indicating that the positive effect of authenticity on trust becomes weaker among highly skeptical consumers. Overall, the study concludes that digital authenticity is a key determinant of purchase intention in digital environments, but its effectiveness depends on a brand's ability to build trust and address consumer skepticism. Therefore, organizations should prioritize transparent, consistent, and credible digital communications to strengthen trust and enhance purchase intentions among Generation Z consumers. Future studies may expand this framework by incorporating variables such as brand credibility, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer credibility, or perceived value, as well as examining different demographic groups and cross-cultural contexts.

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