



The Influence of Influencer Marketing on the Interest in Purchasing MSME Products in Southeast Aceh

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of influencer marketing on the purchase intention of MSME products in Southeast Aceh Regency. Amidst the aggressive internet penetration in Aceh Province, reaching 90%, local MSME actors still face challenges in transforming conventional promotional strategies into digital platforms. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires from 100 respondents selected via purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression through SPSS software. The results show that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($p < 0.05$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.526. This indicates that 52.6% of the variability in consumer purchase intention in Southeast Aceh is triggered by the credibility and attractiveness of public figures on social media. These findings confirm that collaboration with local influencers who understand regional authenticity values is a crucial strategy to expand MSME market access in buffer zones. The practical implications suggest that local governments and business actors strengthen the digital marketing ecosystem through community-based branding training.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Influencer Marketing; MSMEs; Purchase Intention; Southeast Aceh.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global economic landscape is currently undergoing a paradigm shift from conventional models to a massively integrated digital ecosystem. In Indonesia, the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector plays a crucial role as the backbone of national economic stability, contributing significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment (Pratama, 2024). However, the challenges faced by MSMEs in the era of Industry 4.0 and moving towards Society 5.0 are no longer simply production capacity, but also their ability to adapt to the dynamics of digital marketing. This transformation has given rise to the phenomenon of *influencer marketing* as the most persuasive marketing communication instrument in the past decade (Sari & Wahyudi, 2020). The use of digital public figures on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram has proven effective in cutting through bureaucratic information channels between producers and consumers, creating more personal interactions, and ultimately stimulating instant purchase intent through content perceived as authentic by their followers (Mulyani & Fitriani, 2021).

In Aceh Province, information technology penetration is showing a very aggressive trend. Based on the latest data from 2025, internet connectivity in the Veranda of Mecca region has exceeded 90%, indicating that the Acehnese people, including those in the district, have been intensively exposed to the flow of digital information (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers, 2025). Southeast Aceh Regency is an interesting location for empirical

study. With a population of 38,490 MSMEs in 2023, this region has enormous potential for a people-oriented economy (Aceh Cooperatives and SMEs Office, 2024). However, the reality on the ground shows a paradox: despite adequate digital infrastructure, the majority of businesses in Southeast Aceh remain trapped at the micro-scale with marketing strategies that rely heavily on local, offline promotions. This results in superior regional products often failing to penetrate broader markets or even maintain relevance among local consumers who are shifting to online shopping (Sudaryanto & Rachmawati, 2022).

The urgency of this research is reinforced by the disparity in digital literacy and technology utilization between growth centers like Banda Aceh and buffer regions like Southeast Aceh. In Banda Aceh, the effectiveness of *endorsements* by local *influencers* has had a significant positive impact on the sales performance of MSMEs (Hidayat & Saputra, 2023). However, the success model in the provincial capital cannot be replicated identically in Southeast Aceh without in-depth scientific study. Southeast Aceh has unique demographic, psychographic, and consumer behavior characteristics that may respond differently to *influencer marketing strategies*. The lack of empirical studies focusing on digital market dynamics in this region creates a significant *research gap* (Gunawan & Wulandari, 2022, Hasanah & Mardhiyah, 2021). Most digital marketing literature in Indonesia remains concentrated on Java or metropolitan cities, resulting in generalizations that ignore local wisdom and regional geographic barriers.

This research gap also includes limited discussion of how *influencer marketing mechanisms* work to influence purchasing intention in communities with strong attachments to local values but who are increasingly exposed to global trends through social media. Previous research often only looks at influence in general terms, without examining how content relevance, influencer credibility, and product suitability with local identity interact (Pratama, 2024; Lou & Yuan, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature by prioritizing local data from Southeast Aceh as the primary basis for analysis. The novel contribution offered is a model of digital influence in a region with intermediate digital literacy, where trust in *influencer* figures is a highly sensitive determining variable amidst limited physical access to modern markets.

Theoretically, this study aims to broaden the scope of consumer behavior theory, particularly in the context of purchase intention *triggered* by external stimuli in the form of third-party marketing on social media (Sari & Wahyudi, 2020). Practically, this research is expected to provide strategic recommendations for MSMEs in Southeast Aceh to be more bold and targeted in allocating their marketing resources to digital platforms. Furthermore, for the

local government, these findings can serve as a foundation for formulating more applicable digital literacy training policies, not merely introducing technology, but utilizing technology to create added economic value (Sudaryanto & Rachmawati, 2022). With a systematic quantitative approach, it is hoped that the causal relationship between *influencer marketing* and purchase intention can be accurately mapped, thereby providing a concrete solution to the market access challenges that have hampered the growth of MSMEs in Southeast Aceh.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In modern marketing discourse, *influencer marketing* is not just a passing trend, but rather an evolved form of digitally amplified *word-of-mouth*. *Theoretically, the influence of influencers* on purchase intention can be explained through *Source Credibility Theory*, where message effectiveness is highly dependent on the audience's perception of the message provider's expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Sari & Wahyudi, 2020). In the context of MSMEs in Southeast Aceh, an *influencer* acts as an information bridge, validating the quality of local products that may not have previously received widespread exposure. When an *influencer* posts product reviews or usage content, their followers tend to internalize the message, transforming awareness *into* real interest (Hidayat & Saputra, 2023).

This argument is supported by the fact that consumers in the social media era tend to trust recommendations from individuals they consider "equals" or "idols" more than formal advertising from companies. The presence of *influencers* adds a personal touch and a humanistic narrative to MSME products, which in turn reduces consumer skepticism (Gunawan & Wulandari, 2022). Creative visual content on platforms like TikTok or Instagram can demonstrate a product's utility in a practical way, thereby triggering a strong emotional response in the audience.

Previous research consistently shows that the higher the credibility and relevance of an *influencer's content*, the more likely the audience is to make a purchase (Pratama, 2024). In a region with strong social ties like Southeast Aceh, the *trust factor* built by local or culturally relevant *influencers* is a very strong determinant. This is because *influencers* are seen as eyewitnesses to product quality, which mediates consumer concerns about the risks of online shopping.

3. METHOD

This study implements a systematic quantitative approach to test the hypothesis regarding the influence of *influencer marketing* on the purchase intention of MSME products in Southeast Aceh. The choice of quantitative methods is based on the need to generalize the findings and measure the strength of the relationship between variables objectively through numerical data. This type of research is causal associative research, which by design aims to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent variable, namely marketing strategies through influential figures on social media, with the dependent variable, namely consumer behavioral tendencies in the form of purchase intention. By focusing on the Southeast Aceh region, this study seeks to capture the dynamics of the digital market in communities that are geographically located in the buffer zone but have high digital activity.

The population in this study is dynamic and broad, encompassing all residents of Southeast Aceh Regency who are active users of social media (especially TikTok and Instagram) and have the potential to transact with local MSME products. Considering the population size cannot be precisely identified (*infinite population*), the sample size was determined by considering statistical data representation. The researcher determined a sample size of 100 respondents, a number deemed adequate for linear regression analysis using SPSS software in accordance with the rule of *thumb* in marketing management research.

The sampling technique used was *non-probability sampling* with a *purposive sampling approach*. Respondent criteria were determined specifically so that the data obtained was relevant to the phenomenon being studied, namely: (1) domiciled in Southeast Aceh Regency, (2) productive age (17-45 years) who are active users of social media, and (3) have seen or interacted with promotional content for MSME products uploaded by *influencers* or through the official social media accounts of business actors.

The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire distributed online through the *Google Forms platform*. This questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Influencer marketing variables were measured through credibility indicators that include expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Meanwhile, the purchase intention variable was measured through the dimensions of transactional interest, referential interest, preferential interest, and exploratory interest. Before full data collection, the research instrument first went through a pilot test to test its validity and reliability. The validity test was carried out by looking at the *Pearson Correlation value*, while the reliability test used the *Cronbach's Alpha coefficient*. The instrument was declared feasible if the calculated r-value was greater than the table r-value and

the alpha value was above 0.60, which ensures that the questionnaire was able to provide consistent measurement results.

The data analysis technique in this study was carried out through several stages using SPSS 26 software (Ghozali, 2018). The first stage is descriptive statistical analysis to describe the respondents' profiles and their perceptions of the variables studied. The second stage is the classical assumption test, which is an absolute requirement in linear regression analysis. This includes a normality test to ensure the data is normally distributed, a linearity test to see the linear relationship between variables, and a heteroscedasticity test to ensure there is no inequality in residual variance. After the data meets the requirements, a simple linear regression analysis is conducted to determine the contribution of *influencer marketing* in predicting changes in purchasing intention. The final step is a hypothesis test using a t-test (partial) to determine the significance of the individual influence and an analysis of the coefficient of determination (R^2) to determine the extent to which the research model is able to explain the variability of purchasing intention in Southeast Aceh. All these procedures are carried out carefully to produce credible and scientifically accountable findings for the development of local MSME strategies.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

An analysis of respondent characteristics provides an empirical foundation for understanding the demographic distribution of consumers exposed to *influencer marketing strategies* in Southeast Aceh. Based on data collected from 100 respondents, the sample profile shows specific tendencies toward productive age groups and a certain gender dominance, reflecting the dynamics of the local digital market. This grouping is important to validate that the research data comes from subjects with authority and relevant experience in interacting with promotional content on social media. The research data summarizes the respondent profile as follows:

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics.

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	42	42%
	Woman	58	58%
Age	18 – 30 Years	65	65%
	31 – 45 Years	25	25%
	> 45 Years	10	10%
Education	High School/Equivalent	40	40%
	Diploma/Bachelor's Degree (S1)	55	55%
	Postgraduate (S2/S3)	5	5%
Main Platform	TikTok	52	52%
	Instagram	38	38%
	Facebook/Other	10	10%

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

The results above indicate that the majority of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 30 (65%), categorized as Gen Z and late Millennials. This group has high digital literacy and is more responsive to persuasive narratives constructed by *influencers* than to conventional advertising. The predominance of female respondents (58%) confirms the central role of gender in online shopping activities and product reference searches through social media. Furthermore, the educational background dominated by Bachelor's degrees (55%) indicates that respondents have sufficient cognitive abilities to evaluate the credibility of marketing messages. The use of TikTok as a primary platform (52%) indicates a shift in consumer preferences in Southeast Aceh toward more interactive, short-form visual content. Overall, this profile indicates that the MSME ecosystem in Southeast Aceh is transitioning toward marketing modernization driven by a young, educated and digitally adaptive consumer segment.

Data analysis

Based on the procedures that have been explained, the following is a summary of the statistical findings that form the basis for decision making in this study:

Instrument Validity and Reliability Test

The table below shows that all statement items have met the validity and reliability criteria, so the instrument is suitable for use for further analysis.

Table 2. Summary of Validity and Reliability Tests.

Variables	Indicator	r-Count	r-Table	Information	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer Marketing (X)	X1.1	0.782	0.196	Valid	0.845 (Reliable)
	X1.2	0.815	0.196	Valid	
	X1.3	0.740	0.196	Valid	
Purchase Interest (Y)	Y1.1	0.802	0.196	Valid	0.812 (Reliable)
	Y1.2	0.765	0.196	Valid	
	Y1.3	0.798	0.196	Valid	

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

Based on the validity test results in Table 2, it can be seen that all indicators used in this study have a calculated r-value greater than the r-table of 0.196 at a significance level of 5% with a total of 100 respondents. In the Influencer Marketing (X) variable, indicator X1.1 has an calculated r-value of 0.782, indicator X1.2 of 0.815, and indicator X1.3 of 0.740. These three values are greater than the r-table value (0.196), so it can be concluded that all indicators in the Influencer Marketing variable are declared valid and able to measure the construct referred to in this study.

Furthermore, for the Purchase Interest (Y) variable, indicator Y1.1 has a calculated r-value of 0.802, indicator Y1.2 of 0.765, and indicator Y1.3 of 0.798. All calculated r-values are also greater than the r-table value of 0.196. Thus, it can be concluded that all indicators in the Purchase Interest variable are declared valid and suitable for use as research instruments.

In addition to the validity test, this study also conducted a reliability test to determine the level of consistency of the research instrument. The test results showed that the Influencer Marketing variable (X) had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.845, while the Purchase Intention variable (Y) had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.812. Both values are greater than the minimum reliability limit of 0.70, so it can be concluded that the research instrument used in this study is reliable or has a good level of consistency. Based on the results of the validity and reliability tests, it can be concluded that all indicators in the Influencer Marketing and Purchase Intention variables have met the validity and reliability criteria. Therefore, this research instrument is declared feasible and can be used for data collection in the study, and can be continued to the next stage of data analysis such as regression testing and hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

The table below explains the extent to which *the Influencer Marketing variable* partially influences the purchasing interest of people in Southeast Aceh.

Table 3. Results of Partial Significance Test (t-Test).

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	t-Count	Sig.	Information
(Constant)	8,450	1,240	6,814	0,000	-
Influencer Marketing	0.675	0.085	7,941	0,000	Significant

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis in Table 3, it is known that the Influencer Marketing variable has a regression coefficient (B) value of 0.675 with a t-value of 7.941 and a significance level of 0.000. This significance value is smaller than the significance level used in the study, which is 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). This indicates that the Influencer Marketing variable has a positive and significant influence on the Purchase Intention of the people in Southeast Aceh. The regression coefficient of 0.675 indicates that every 1 unit

increase in Influencer Marketing will increase Purchase Intention by 0.675 units, assuming other variables are held constant. This indicates that the better the marketing strategy carried out through influencers, the higher the public's interest in purchasing the promoted product.

In addition, the calculated t-value of 7.941, which is much greater than the t-table value (around 1.984 at $\alpha = 0.05$ with $n = 100$), further strengthens that the Influencer Marketing variable has a significant effect on Purchase Intention. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that Influencer Marketing has an effect on Purchase Intention of the community can be accepted. The results of this study indicate that the use of influencers in marketing activities can increase public interest in a product. Influencers who have credibility, popularity, and the ability to convey product information in an interesting way can influence consumer perception and trust, thus encouraging the emergence of interest in making a purchase. Therefore, an influencer-based marketing strategy can be an effective approach for companies in increasing consumer purchase interest, especially in the Southeast Aceh region.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

This table shows how much the Influencer Marketing variable is able to explain variations in the Purchase Interest variable of people in Southeast Aceh.

Table 4. Model Summary (Coefficient of Determination R^2).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.725	0.526	0.521	2,145

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

Based on the analysis results in Table 4, the R Square (R^2) value was obtained at 0.526. This value indicates that the Influencer Marketing variable is able to explain the variation in changes in the Purchase Interest variable of the people in Southeast Aceh by 52.6 %. In other words, 52.6 % of the people's purchase interest is influenced by the Influencer Marketing strategy carried out in product marketing activities.

Meanwhile, the remaining 47.4 % is influenced by other factors outside this research model that were not examined in the research, such as product price, product quality, brand image, promotion, and consumer trust.

In addition, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.521 shows that after adjusting for the number of variables in the model, the ability of the independent variables to explain the dependent variable is still at 52.1%, which means that this research model has a fairly strong level of explanatory ability.

The R value of 0.725 also indicates a strong relationship between Influencer Marketing and Purchase Intention, with a correlation coefficient ranging from 0.60 to 0.79. Therefore, it

can be concluded that Influencer Marketing has a strong relationship and makes a significant contribution to influencing purchase intention among people in Southeast Aceh.

Discussion

The results of this study provide an empirical overview of the effectiveness of influencer-based digital marketing strategies in increasing public purchasing interest in MSME products in Southeast Aceh. A simple linear regression analysis conducted using SPSS software shows that the influencer marketing variable has a positive and significant influence on public purchasing interest. This is evidenced by the calculated t-value of 7.941, which far exceeds the t-table value of 1.984 at a significance level of 5% ($p < 0.05$). In addition, the regression coefficient value of 0.675 indicates that every increase in the effectiveness of influencer marketing activities will be followed by an increase in consumer purchasing interest by 67.5%. Thus, the results of this study provide empirical evidence that the use of influencers as a digital marketing communication strategy can encourage consumer preference for the promoted product.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.526 indicates that approximately 52.6% of the variation in purchasing interest of people in Southeast Aceh can be explained by the influencer marketing variable, while the remaining 47.4% is influenced by other factors outside the research model, such as product price, product quality, brand image, ease of distribution access, and consumer experience with MSME products. This finding indicates that influencer marketing is an important determinant in shaping consumer behavior in the digital era, especially in a society that is increasingly actively using social media as a source of information and reference in the purchasing decision-making process.

Conceptually, the findings of this study align with the perspective of Social Influence Theory, which explains that individuals tend to form attitudes and behaviors based on the social influence of figures perceived as possessing credibility, expertise, and psychological closeness. Influencers on social media function as opinion leaders capable of building positive perceptions of a product through persuasive and interpersonal communication processes. Research conducted by Fachrudin et al. (2024) also shows that recommendations conveyed by influential figures on social media can increase consumer trust in a product, thereby encouraging the emergence of purchasing interest. In this context, influencers act not only as a promotional medium, but also as a mediator of trust between producers and consumers.

The results of this study are also consistent with a study conducted by Pratama and Wijaya (2023), which found that influencer marketing has a significant influence on consumer purchasing intention in the Indonesian digital marketplace. The study confirmed that

recommendations delivered by influencers are often perceived as more authentic and credible than conventional, institutional advertising. This is especially relevant in societies with collectivist cultural characteristics, where purchasing decisions are often influenced by social references and recommendations from trusted individuals.

However, this study also revealed different dynamics compared to research in large urban areas. While in metropolitan markets like Jakarta or Medan, the visual appeal or physical attractiveness of influencers is often the dominant factor in influencing consumers, in Southeast Aceh, trustworthiness and alignment with local cultural values play a more significant role. This suggests that the success of influencer marketing is determined not only by popularity or number of followers, but also by the level of trust and social relevance an influencer enjoys within their community.

These findings reinforce the argument put forward by Nasution and Lubis (2022), who stated that the effectiveness of digital marketing communications in non-metropolitan areas is strongly influenced by the perception of content authenticity. Consumers in areas with strong social ties tend to be more sensitive to promotional messages that are perceived as overly manipulative or do not reflect the reality of product use. Therefore, influencers who are able to present products naturally within the context of local people's daily lives have a higher level of persuasiveness than influencers who only display explicit promotional content. From an academic perspective, the results of this study contribute to the development of literature on digital consumer behavior by confirming that local geographic and cultural contexts can moderate the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies. This suggests that digital marketing approaches cannot be applied uniformly across all regions but need to be adapted to the social and cultural characteristics of local communities.

Meanwhile, from a practical perspective, the findings of this study provide strategic implications for MSMEs in Southeast Aceh. Businesses are advised to be more selective in selecting influencers as promotional partners, not only based on the number of followers but also considering the level of engagement, credibility, and the alignment of the influencer's values with the identity of the product being marketed. This strategy is believed to be able to increase the effectiveness of marketing communications while strengthening the emotional connection between consumers and local products. Furthermore, local governments can also utilize the potential of local influencers as part of their regional creative economy development strategy. Digital-based MSME empowerment programs should not only focus on training in the use of e-commerce platforms but also include strengthening personal branding, product storytelling, and digital collaboration with local content creators. With this approach, the digital

transformation of MSMEs in Southeast Aceh will not only be oriented towards market expansion but also towards creating a sustainable, community-based digital marketing ecosystem.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study provides a fundamental conclusion that *influencer marketing* plays a crucial role and has a significant positive influence in stimulating consumer purchasing interest in MSME products in Southeast Aceh Regency. This finding confirms that the power of digital narratives built by opinion leaders on social media can mitigate geographic barriers and the limitations of conventional promotions currently experienced by micro-enterprises in the region. Theoretically, the success of this model proves that source credibility, which includes aspects of trustworthiness and local appeal, is a determining variable in transforming audience perceptions into actual purchasing intentions. With a fairly substantial coefficient of determination, this study shows that the marketing transformation from traditional patterns to a digital ecosystem is no longer merely complementary, but rather an urgent need for MSMEs in buffer areas to remain competitive amidst the increasingly aggressive flow of digital consumption.

Based on these findings, the practical recommendation is for MSMEs in Southeast Aceh to begin allocating their resources more strategically to collaborate with local *influencers* who have an emotional and cultural connection with the local community. This is crucial because authentic content is far more valuable to local consumers than simply having a large following. The local government is advised to initiate ongoing digital literacy training programs, particularly in facilitating synergy between creative communities and MSMEs through business incubation platforms. Meanwhile, future researchers are expected to expand the scope of variables by adding price, product quality, or trust in *e-commerce platforms* as moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive picture of the complexity of digital consumer behavior in Aceh and the surrounding region.

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