

The Effect of Fake Local Branding and Hard Selling Strategies on Product Interest in Consumer Purchase Decisions for SKINTIFIC Cosmetic Products in Semarang City

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Abstract

The increasing prevalence of Chinese cosmetic products in the Indonesian market, particularly the Skintific brand, has intensified scholarly attention to marketing strategies such as fake local branding and hard selling. However, limited studies have examined how these strategies influence product interest and consumer purchasing decisions among Indonesian consumers. This study aims to analyze the effect of fake local branding and hard-selling strategies on product interest and purchasing decisions for Skintific cosmetic products in Semarang, Indonesia. A quantitative survey design was employed, involving 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling based on the criterion of having tried or purchased Skintific products. Data were collected through online questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The findings indicate that fake local branding has a positive and significant effect on both product interest and purchasing decisions. Hard selling also positively and significantly influences product interest and purchasing decisions, while product interest plays an important role in shaping purchasing decisions and serves as an intervening variable linking marketing strategies to consumer buying behavior. These findings support the view that marketing strategies based on perceived local identity and persuasive sales techniques can shape consumer attitudes and purchasing actions in the cosmetics sector. The study concludes that the combination of fake local branding and hard-selling strategies effectively

increases consumer interest and purchasing decisions toward Skintific products in the Indonesian cosmetics market. This study contributes to marketing and consumer behavior literature by extending understanding of branding and promotional strategies in the cosmetics industry. Practically, the findings provide insights for cosmetic companies in designing responsive marketing strategies aligned with local consumer preferences and digital market dynamics, while future research may examine additional factors such as brand trust, influencer credibility, and consumer ethnocentrism.

Keywords: Consumer Purchasing Decisions; Cosmetics Marketing; Fake Local Branding; Hard Selling; Product Interest

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide cosmetics sector has seen swift expansion in the last ten years, propelled by innovations in technology, digital advertising, and shifts in consumer habits. Cosmetic items are now viewed not just as additional needs but have transformed into essential elements of self-expression, identity, and lifestyle, particularly among millennials and Generation Z. The rapid expansion in the utilization of social media channels including TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube has greatly impacted consumer behavior within the beauty sector by hastening the dissemination of beauty trends and product suggestions globally (Miftahuddin et al., 2022). International cosmetic brands increasingly utilize digital-based marketing strategies to build emotional engagement and purchasing intention among consumers. One phenomenon that has attracted considerable attention is the rise of Chinese cosmetic brands in international markets, including Indonesia. Chinese cosmetic companies have successfully penetrated Southeast Asian markets through competitive pricing, aggressive promotions, and adaptive branding strategies that align with local consumer preferences (Gunawan & Pertiwi, 2022).

In Indonesia, rising awareness among the public concerning skincare and personal appearance has positioned the cosmetics industry, which is recognized as among the fastest-growing sectors. The growth of e-commerce and digital marketplaces has further intensified competition between local and international cosmetic brands (Rolando & Mulyono, 2025). According to data from Kompas.co.id, Skintific became one of the leading skincare brands in Indonesian e-commerce platforms during the first quarter of 2025, outperforming several established local brands. This phenomenon indicates that foreign

cosmetic brands are capable of dominating the Indonesian market through innovative marketing approaches. One strategy frequently used by international brands is *fake local branding*, a marketing approach in which foreign brands intentionally create the perception that they are local or culturally close to domestic consumers (Utami & Ahmadi, 2024). This strategy is often implemented through local-sounding brand names, culturally adapted advertising narratives, and the use of local influencers to establish familiarity and trust among consumers (Fitriyatunnisa & Supriadi, 2025). In addition, brands also employ *hard selling* strategies through flash sales, limited-time discounts, intensive influencer promotions, and persuasive calls to action to stimulate immediate purchasing behavior.

The researcher addresses this issue by highlighting that consumer buying choices in the cosmetics sector are more and more impacted by psychological views created by branding and marketing tactics. Consumers tend to trust products that appear culturally relevant and emotionally close to their identities. According to (Bendegúz & Tamás, 2026), localization strategies enable foreign brands to reduce consumer resistance by creating a sense of familiarity and emotional attachment. Similarly, (Nugraha et al., 2025) argues that branding strategies associated with local identity and patriotism may positively influence consumer trust and purchasing behavior. In the context of digital marketing, hard selling strategies are also considered effective in accelerating consumer decision-making processes because they create urgency accompanied by increasing fear of missing out (FOMO) tendencies among consumers (Muzumdar, 2021). Consequently, the combination of fake local branding and hard selling strategies has become a powerful marketing tool capable of increasing consumer interest and encouraging purchasing decisions, particularly among digitally active consumers.

Previous studies have discussed the relationship between branding, promotional strategies, and consumer purchasing behavior. (Muzumdar, 2021) found demonstrating that purchasing decisions are positively affected by country of origin and brand image. Similarly, (Simamora, 2002) reported that hard selling strategies significantly affect consumer interest in products. Research conducted by (Kulsum & Sidiq, 2025) also revealed that promotional strategies and pricing positively affect purchasing decisions in digital marketplaces. Furthermore, (Noviati et al., 2025) demonstrated that purchase intention significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions. However, several contradictory findings also emerged. (Hanandre & Widyawati, 2016) argued indicating that country of origin has no direct significant effect on purchase intention, while (Mufti & Lestari, 2023) found that

discount-based promotions do not always significantly affect purchasing decisions. Additionally, (Indriyani & Suri, 2020) stated that purchase intention may not necessarily lead to purchasing decisions because consumers often prioritize other factors such as product safety and credibility. These inconsistencies indicate that the relationship between fake local branding, hard selling, product interest, and purchasing decisions remains inconclusive and requires further investigation.

The gap identified in this research lies in the insufficient investigation of how fake local branding and hard selling tactics jointly affect product interest and purchasing choices in Indonesia's cosmetics sector, especially in relation to Chinese cosmetic brands (Permana, 2025). Most previous research has examined elements like country of origin effects, brand image, or promotional tactics in isolation, rather than combining them into a holistic model of consumer behavior. Furthermore, earlier studies seldom viewed product interest as a mediating factor linking branding and promotional strategies to purchasing decisions. This research is conducted to address the existing gap through uniting theories of brand localization strategy, country of origin effect, and consumer purchasing intention into a comprehensive framework (Septiarani, 2023). The concept of fake local branding is theoretically supported by localization and de-nationalized branding theories, which explain how foreign brands adapt their identities to local markets to enhance consumer acceptance (Pramitha, 2020). Meanwhile, hard selling strategies are supported by persuasive communication theory, which highlights the effectiveness of direct and urgent promotional messages in influencing consumer behavior (Okazaki et al., 2010). Accordingly, this study contributes theoretically through the expansion of discourse on branding adaptation and aggressive promotional strategies within the framework of digital cosmetic marketing in Indonesia.

Based on observed phenomena, earlier research, and recognized research gaps, this research intends to examine the way fake local branding and hard selling strategies operate affect product interest and consumer purchasing decisions regarding *Skintific* cosmetic products in Semarang. The study also examines the role of product interest as an intervening variable in explaining how branding and promotional strategies affect purchasing decisions among Indonesian consumers (Noviandini & Yasa, 2021). This research is intended to provide the researcher with deeper insights into consumer behavior in the digital cosmetics market and contribute to the development of marketing strategies relevant to contemporary consumer trends.

METHODS

A quantitative methodology was applied in this research to examine how deceptive local branding and aggressive selling tactics influence consumer interest and buying decisions concerning *Skintific* cosmetic items in Semarang. A quantitative approach is fitting since the objective of the research is to assess relationships among variables in an objective manner, employing numerical data and statistical evaluation. As noted by (Haryono, 2017), quantitative research is applied to validate objective theories by analyzing the connection between variables that can be quantified and evaluated through statistical methods. Likewise, (Sugiyono, 2017) clarifies that quantitative research focuses on quantifiable data and hypothesis validation to ascertain causal links among variables. Hence, the quantitative the chosen approach aligns with the study's objective to examine the effects generated by independent variables on the dependent aspects namely deceptive local branding and aggressive selling on the dependent variable of purchasing choices, while consumer interest serves as an intermediary variable (Fitriyah & Adiwaty, 2020).

An explanatory survey framework was employed as the research design to analyze and clarify the associations between the variables under study. Explanatory research aims to clarify causal connections among variables via hypothesis testing (Sugiyono, 2020). This design is deemed appropriate as the study examines how marketing strategies affect consumer behavior within the cosmetics sector. The survey method was used to gather data directly from consumers through systematically organized questionnaires distributed online. Earlier research related to branding tactics and purchasing behaviors often employed survey centric quantitative designs to investigate consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions (Devita & Agustini, 2019). However, in contrast to earlier studies that primarily concentrated on direct links between branding and buying decisions, this research incorporates product interest as a mediating variable to enhance the understanding of consumer decision-making processes. As a result, this research design represents an advancement by merging branding strategies, promotional methods, and psychological consumer responses into a single analytical framework (Moelong, 2018).

The population targeted in this research were consumers who had experience purchasing or using *Skintific* cosmetic products in Indonesia, especially those based in Semarang. Since the exact number of consumers was unknown, the researcher applied a

purposive sampling technique (Fernando & Evyanto, 2023). Within this study, purposive sampling was applied as a non-probability technique that selects respondents according to predetermined qualifications aligned with the objectives established in this research (Sugiyono, 2013). The criteria set forth in this research encompassed consumers who had utilized or acquired Skintific products and were acquainted with the brand's promotional efforts through digital channels such as TikTok, Instagram, or Shopee. This study involved a sample size of 100 participants. Sample size selection was based on the principle that quantitative research involving multivariate analysis should comprise a minimum of 5 - 10 times as many participants as the number of indicators included in the questionnaire (Sugiyono, 2013). Given the array of variables and indicators considered in this study, a sample of 100 participants was deemed sufficient to guarantee the validity and reliability of the statistical evaluation.

This investigation utilized both primary and secondary sources for data acquisition, where original participants provided data directly through the completion of online survey forms shared via various digital media (Putri et al., 2025). Closed-ended questions were included in the survey instrument and assessed through a 5-point *Likert* scale extending from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The tool assessed four variables: counterfeit local branding, aggressive marketing, product interest, and buying decisions. Indicators for fake local branding included perception of brand origin, local identity usage, suitability to local needs, and emotional closeness to consumers. Hard selling indicators included direct promotional messages, urgency in purchasing, explicit calls to action, and promotional intensity. Product interest indicators measured consumers' attraction to products, willingness to try products, and intention to purchase. Purchasing decision indicators included confidence in product selection, willingness to spend money, repurchase intention, and recommendation behavior. Similar questionnaire-based instruments have been widely used in consumer behavior and marketing studies examining purchase intention and purchasing decisions (Kulsum & Sidiq, 2025).

Validity and reliability testing were undertaken before hypothesis evaluation to ensure that the instrument met the required standards of quality. Validity testing aimed to determine whether questionnaire items accurately measured the intended variables, while reliability testing evaluated the consistency of the measurement instrument. According to (Ghozali, 2018), an instrument is considered valid if the loading factor value exceeds 0.70 and reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values are above 0.70.

Secondary data were also collected through literature studies involving books, scientific journals, articles, and previous studies relevant to branding strategies, promotional techniques, consumer interest, and purchasing behavior. These secondary sources were used to support the theoretical framework and strengthen the discussion of research findings (Latan & Ghozali, 2015).

This study applied *Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) as the analytical approach using *SmartPLS* software, selected for its capability to support predictive and exploratory analysis of intricate variable relationships, including mediation effects (Latan & Ghozali, 2015). A two-stage analytical framework was implemented in this study, comprising outer model and inner model evaluations, where the outer model was intended to evaluate indicator validity and reliability through convergent validity, discriminant validity, *Cronbach's Alpha*, and *Composite Reliability* criteria. At the same time, the inner model evaluation was conducted to analyze relationships among variables through assessment of path coefficients, the coefficient of determination (R^2), and hypothesis testing using *bootstrapping* techniques. In addition, descriptive statistical analysis was employed to present respondent profiles and the distribution of responses. By applying these analytical procedures, the research intended to generate empirical findings on how deceptive local branding and aggressive selling tactics affect consumer purchasing decisions through product interest among Skintific consumers in Semarang.

RESULTS

1. Descriptive Analysis of Variables

a. Fake local branding variables

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis of Fake Local Branding

Code	Indicator	Red	Category
FLB1	Perception of brand origin	3,95	High
FLB2	Trust in the brand	3,85	High
FLB3	Level of technological development	3,92	High
FLB4	Goods quality standards	3,90	High
	Average	3,90	High

Source: PLS data processing attachment

As presented from the data analysis in Table 1, the Fake Local Branding variable for Skintific products in Semarang City reached an overall mean score of 3.90, placing it in the high category. This demonstrates that consumers in Semarang strongly perceive the

branding strategy carried out by Skintific. In detail, the brand origin perception indicator achieved the highest value of 3.95, indicating that respondents tend to associate this brand with the image of a local product that is relevant to their needs. This was followed by the level of technological development indicator with a value of 3.92 and product quality standards with a value of 3.90. Meanwhile, the brand trust indicator contributed 3.85. The high values for all these indicators reflect that the implemented fake local branding strategy is able to build consumer confidence in the quality and identity of Skintific products in the domestic market.

b. *Hard Selling* variables

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis of Hard Selling

Code	Indicator	Red	Category
HS1	The appeal of visual content	4,00	High
HS2	Brand preference	3,90	High
HS3	Call to action	3,89	High
HS4	Emphasis on urgency and rationality	3,98	High
	Red	3,94	High

Referring to the information displayed in Table 2, the Hard Selling variable for Skintific products in Semarang City obtained an average score of 3.94, which falls within the high criteria. This achievement indicates that consumers in Semarang have a very positive response to the implemented direct promotion strategy. The visual content appeal indicator was the most dominant element with a perfect score of 4.00, proving that the aesthetic quality of the content was the main attractor of respondents' attention. This was followed by the indicators of emphasizing urgency and rationality at 3.98 and brand preference at 3.90. The call to action indicator recorded a score of 3.89, which, although the lowest among the other indicators, still shows strong effectiveness in directing consumer purchasing actions.

c. *Interest Product* variables

Table 3 Descriptive Analysis of Product Interest

Code	Indicator	Red	Category
IP1	Interest in the product	4,27	High
IP2	Intention to purchase a product	3,79	High
IP3	Interest in the available goods	3,48	High
IP4	Referential interest	4,03	High
	Red	3,89	High

As indicated by the findings in Table 3, the Product Interest variable among Skintific consumers in Semarang City obtained a mean value of 3.89 and was categorized as high. This indicates that respondents have a strong interest in owning and using the product. The product interest indicator is the most prominent element with a score of 4.27, which proves that the attractiveness of the Skintific product itself is the main factor that triggers consumer interest. This is followed by the referential interest indicator at 4.03 and the product purchase intention at 3.79. Meanwhile, the interest indicator for available goods obtained a value of 3.48, which, although in the lowest position, still makes a positive contribution to shaping overall consumer interest in the brand.

d. Variable Purchase Decision

Table 4 Descriptive Analysis of Purchasing Decisions

Code	Indicator	Red	Categories
KP1	Confidence in the choice of products	4,34	Height
KP2	Product repurchase	3,89	Height
KP3	Recommendations to others	4,13	Height
KP4	Product information search	3,62	Medium
	Average	3,99	

As shown by the data in Table 4, the Purchase Decision variable for Skintific products in Semarang City reached a mean value of 3.99, which is classified under the category of high criteria. These results reflect that respondents have a strong level of stability in choosing and purchasing the product. The indicator of confidence in product choice was the most dominant element with a score of 4.34, which proves that consumer confidence in product effectiveness is the main driver of transactions. Furthermore, the indicator of recommendations to others reached a value of 4.13, followed by product repurchases of 3.89. The indicator of searching information about the product obtained a score of 3.62, which although it was the lowest score, still showed the active efforts of the respondents in validating the product before finally deciding to buy.

2. Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

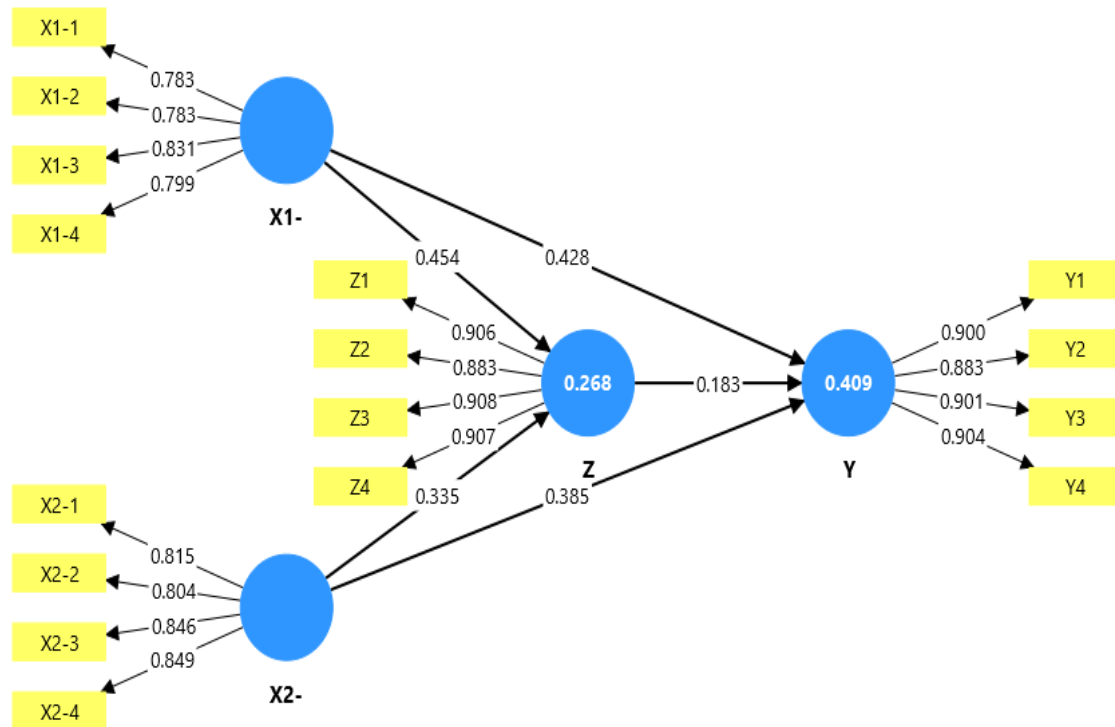


Figure 1 Outer Model

To verify that the indicators used could evaluate the research variables in an accurate and consistent manner, an analysis of the measurement model was performed. This test is intended to assess the level of validity and reliability. Data before analysis is carried out on structural models. In evaluating the measurement model, several tests were conducted, including convergent validity, internal consistency, and discriminant validity assessments.

a. Validity Test

Table 5 Convergent Validity Test Results

	Fake local branding	Hard selling	Product Interest	Purchase decision
FLC1	0.783			
FLC2	0.783			
FLC3	0.831			
FLC4	0.799			
HS1		0.815		
HS2		0.804		
HS3		0.846		
HS4		0.849		
IP1			0.900	
IP2			0.883	
IP3			0.901	

	Fake local branding	Hard selling	Product Interest	Purchase decision
IP4			0.904	
KP1				0.906
KP2				0.883
KP3				0.908
KP4				0.907

Source : PLS data processing attachment

Referring to Table 5, each indicator across all variables demonstrates an outer loading value exceeding 0.5, thereby confirming their validity for this research. For the Fake Local Branding variable, the maximum outer loading value is 0.831, whereas the minimum value is 0.783. Regarding the hard selling variable, the maximum outer value is 0.849, with a minimum of 0.804. The product interest variable's outer loading values range from a high of 0.904 to a low of 0.883. In the same manner, the Purchase Decision variable records outer loading values with a maximum of 0.908 and a minimum of 0.883. Consequently, the findings from the convergent validity test indicate that all indicators in the research model possess a strong level of validity, showing no elements that warrant exclusion, allowing for further analysis to progress to the subsequent phase.

Table 6 Discriminant Validity Value (Cross Loading)

	Fake local branding	Hard selling	Product Interest	Purchase decision
FLB1	0.783	-0.144	0.359	0.262
FLB2	0.783	-0.212	0.331	0.269
FLB3	0.831	-0.126	0.372	0.385
FLB4	0.799	-0.059	0.333	0.341
HS1	-0.180	0.815	0.305	0.187
HS2	-0.138	0.804	0.259	0.263
HS3	-0.121	0.846	0.302	0.207
HS4	-0.113	0.849	0.331	0.204
IP1	0.391	0.352	0.900	0.396
IP2	0.388	0.325	0.883	0.416
IP3	0.390	0.308	0.901	0.374
IP4	0.398	0.311	0.904	0.438
KP1	0.343	0.302	0.404	0.906
KP2	0.366	0.186	0.407	0.883
KP3	0.347	0.221	0.427	0.908
KP4	0.380	0.224	0.396	0.907

Referring to the findings in Table 6, the discriminant validity assessment through the cross loading approach indicates that each indicator exhibits its highest correlation with the specific variable it was designed to measure rather than with other variables in the

research model. This indicates that each instrument is able to distinguish constructs from each other precisely without significant overlap. Therefore, it can be stated that *the criteria of discriminant validity* have been met, so that all of these indicators are worthy of use for further analysis because they truly represent their respective constructs.

b. Reliability Test

Table 7 Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Fake local branding	0.812	0.639
Hard selling	0.848	0.687
Product Interest	0.919	0.805
Purchase decision	0.923	0.812

Source: PLS data processing attachment

The results of the analysis in Table 7 indicate that every latent variable examined in this study satisfies the required standards of validity and reliability, characterized by the acquisition of Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7 and AVE > 0.5 . This achievement confirms that the measuring instrument used has good stability and that each latent variable is able to adequately represent its constituent indicators. Therefore, this research model has qualified to proceed to hypothesis testing.

3. Analysis of Measurement Model (Inner Model)

a. Test R Square Value

Table 8 R Square Values

Models	R square	Adjusted R square
Purchase decision	0.409	0.397
Product Interest	0.268	0.258

Referring to the data shown in Table 8, the Product Interest variable (Y) has an *R-Square* value of 0.409 and an *R-Square Adjusted* of 0.397, suggesting that 39.7% of the changes in product interest can be explained by the independent variables included in the model. Meanwhile, the Purchase Decision (Z) variable records an *R-Square* of 0.268 and an *R-Square Adjusted* of 0.256, which means that 25.6% of the changes in purchasing decisions are explained by the independent variables. Overall, the findings reflect that the developed research model has sufficiently reliable predictive strength. The following stage of analysis centers on evaluating the hypothesis through the t-statistics value, where validity is established when the t-statistics exceeds the corresponding t-table benchmark.

b. Hypothesis Test (Bootstrapping)

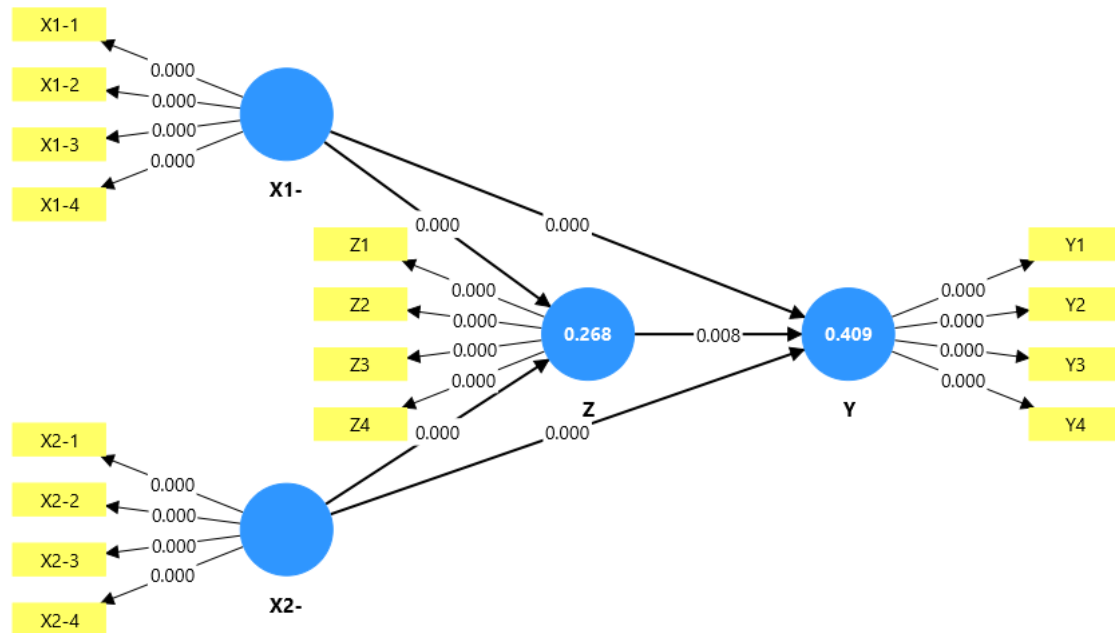


Figure 2 Structural Model Testing

To measure the intensity of the influence, the hypothesis was tested by evaluating the path coefficient value obtained from the analysis, along with the t-statistics value to assess the degree of significance. The assessment of these parameters offers insight into the robustness or frailty of the connections between variables within the research model. The determination to accept or dismiss the hypothesis relies on a significance value (p-value) with a cutoff of 0.05. A probability value lower than 0.05 serves as the basis for accepting the hypothesis, thereby confirming that the interrelationship among the variables is statistically meaningful.

Table 9 Hypothesis Test Based on Path Coefficient

Intervariable influence	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard Deviation	T-Statistic	P - values
Fake local branding affects purchasing decisions	0.428	0.427	0.079	5.418	0.000
Fake local branding affects product interest	0.454	0.455	0.067	6.752	0.000
Hard selling affects purchasing decisions	0.385	0.387	0.070	5.484	0.000
Hard selling affects product interest	0.335	0.337	0.070	4.764	0.000
Product interest affects purchase decisions	0.183	0.178	0.069	2.656	0.008

Source : PLS data processing attachment

A pathway of association between variables is considered meaningful when the t-statistic reaches a threshold of ≥ 1.96 with a significance level (α) of 0.05, or if it presents a

p-value of ≤ 0.05 . According to (Haryono, 2017), a higher value of the significant path coefficient indicates a stronger predictive connection among the latent variables analyzed.

c. Hypothesis Testing Results

1) Fake local branding of the purchase decision

The *bootstrapping* analysis showed a *path coefficient* reaching 0.428, together with a *T-statistic* value of 5.418 and a *P-value* recorded at 0.000. Because the *T-value* surpasses 1.96 while the *P-value* is less than 0.05, the initial hypothesis is confirmed, suggesting that variable X1 positively and significantly affects variable Y. These findings imply that as X1 increases, Y also ascends. The positive coefficient value illustrates a direct correlation between the two variables.

2) Fake local branding against product interest

Findings from the examination revealed that the association between X1 and Z produced a path coefficient value of 0.454, supported by a T-statistical result of 6.752 and a P-value of 0.000. Since the T-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the P-value remains under 0.05, the criteria for hypothesis validation are fulfilled. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is confirmed, indicating a positive and significant influence of X1 on variable Z.

3) Hard selling against the purchase decision

From the analytical process, a path coefficient of 0.385 was identified, accompanied by a T-statistic reaching 5.484 and a P-value of 0.000. Since the T-statistic is greater than 1.96 and the P-value is below 0.05, the third hypothesis is validated, confirming that variable X2 positively and significantly affects variable Y. In practical terms, better quality in X2 will lead to a corresponding growth in Y.

4) Hard selling against product interest

Based on the examination findings, the relationship produced a path coefficient of 0.335, accompanied by a T-statistic reaching 4.764 and a P-value of 0.000. Because these values satisfy the hypothesis testing criteria, the fourth hypothesis is supported, indicating that X2 positively and significantly influences variable Z. This suggests that growth in X2 will be followed by an increase in Z.

5) Product Interest on Purchase Decision

Based on the evaluation findings, the linkage between Z and Y produced a path coefficient value of 0.183 together with a T-statistic of 2.656 and a P-value of 0.008. These figures demonstrate compliance with the hypothesis testing standards, indicating a statistically meaningful relationship between the two variables. Accordingly, the fifth hypothesis is supported, showing that variable Z positively and significantly affects variable Y.

d. Indirect *Effect Specific Test*

Table 10 Indirect Effect Specific Test

Influence between variables	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard Deviation	T - statistic	P - values
FLB > IP > KP	0.083	0.081	0.034	2.423	0.015
HS > IP > KP	0.061	0.061	0.028	2.166	0.030

Source: PLS data processing attachment

According to the information in Table 10, the elucidation of the outcomes from the specific indirect effect evaluation can be articulated as follows:

1. As shown in Table 4.13, the impact of Fake Local Branding (FLB) toward Purchase Decisions (KP) through the mediation of Product Interest (IP) generated a path coefficient of 0.083, with a t-statistic reaching 2.423 and a p-value recorded at 0.015. This evidence demonstrates that the indirect influence is statistically significant. Accordingly, Product Interest (IP) can be confirmed as an effective intermediary variable linking Pseudo-Local Branding to Purchase Decisions.
2. The impact of Hard Selling (HS) on Purchase Decisions (KP) through Product Interest (IP) presents a path coefficient value of 0.061 with a t-statistic of 2.166 and a p-value of 0.030. This suggests that Product Interest (IP) significantly mediates the connection between the Hard Selling strategy and consumer purchase decisions. Therefore, both mediation hypotheses in this analysis have been confirmed as accepted.

DISCUSSION

1. Results Analysis

The results obtained from this study reveal that fake local branding and hard selling strategies significantly influence product interest and purchasing decisions among consumers of Skintific cosmetic products in Semarang. In addition, product interest was

proven to significantly affect purchasing decisions and function serving as an intermediary variable that links marketing strategies to consumer purchasing behavior. These results demonstrate that consumer purchasing behavior in the cosmetics industry is strongly influenced by branding perception and promotional stimulation delivered through digital marketing platforms.

The significant effect of fake local branding on purchasing decisions suggests that consumers tend to trust and choose products that appear culturally close and relevant to local values. Skintific successfully creates the perception of being familiar with Indonesian consumers through the use of local influencers, adapted communication styles, and promotional messages emphasizing compatibility with Indonesian skin conditions. This localized perception strengthens consumers' confidence and positively shapes their purchasing behavior.

Furthermore, fake local branding was also found to significantly affect product interest. Consumers become more interested in products perceived as suitable for their local needs and preferences. The emotional closeness created through localized branding strategies encourages consumers to search for product information, develop curiosity, and eventually show purchase intention. This indicates that branding strategies emphasizing local identity can effectively increase consumer attraction toward foreign cosmetic products.

The findings also show that hard selling strategies significantly influence both product interest and purchasing decisions. Promotional techniques such as flash sales, limited-time offers, discounts, and persuasive calls to action create urgency among consumers and encourage immediate purchasing behavior. Consumers exposed to intensive promotional content through social media and e-commerce platforms tend to develop stronger interest and make quicker purchasing decisions.

In addition, product interest significantly influences purchasing decisions. Consumers who are interested in Skintific products, seek information about the products, and perceive benefits from them are more likely to make actual purchasing decisions. This finding confirms that product interest acts as a psychological bridge connecting marketing stimuli with consumer purchasing behavior.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The results obtained from this study reveal that discussing branding strategies and consumer purchasing behavior. The positive influence of fake local branding on purchasing decisions supports the findings of (Devita & Agustini, 2019), who emphasized that perceptions regarding *country-of-origin* and brand image significantly affect purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to perceive products associated with positive local identity as more trustworthy and suitable for their needs.

The result regarding the relationship between fake local branding and product interest also aligns with (Ayuningtyas & Atmanto, 2024), who explained that localization strategies create emotional attachment and familiarity that increase consumer purchase intention. Similarly, (Pramitha, 2020) emphasized that country of origin effects influence consumer attitudes and perceptions toward products.

The findings related to hard selling strategies are consistent with Simamora and Suryani (2025), who found that hard selling significantly affects consumer interest through intensive promotional exposure. The study also supports (Kulsum & Sidiq, 2025), who reported that promotional strategies and pricing significantly influence purchasing decisions in digital marketplaces. Consumers exposed to direct promotional approaches and urgent marketing messages tend to make faster purchasing decisions.

In addition, the statistically significant connection between product interest and purchasing decisions is consistent with (Khoirunisa, 2024), which demonstrated that purchase intention contributes positively to the formation of purchasing decisions. Consumers who show strong interest in products generally possess greater readiness and motivation to complete purchases.

However, this study differs from several previous findings. (Sitorus, 2022) identified that *country of origin* did not directly exert a significant influence on purchase intention, while (Mufti & Lestari, 2023) concluded that discount strategies were not significantly associated with purchasing decisions. These differences may be caused by variations in consumer characteristics, research objects, and digital marketing contexts. In this study, the intensive use of digital platforms such as TikTok and Shopee may strengthen the effectiveness of branding and promotional strategies.

3. Implications of Findings

The results obtained from this study offer contributions that are relevant to both theoretical development and practical application. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of marketing and consumer behavior literature by integrating fake local branding, hard selling, product interest, and purchasing decisions into a single analytical framework. Previous studies generally discussed these variables separately, whereas this study demonstrates their interconnected relationships within the context of digital cosmetic marketing.

This study also strengthens the theory of brand localization and persuasive communication. The results prove that emotional closeness created through localization strategies and urgency created through hard selling significantly influence consumer psychological responses and purchasing behavior. These findings enrich discussions regarding how foreign brands adapt to local markets and compete within highly digitalized industries.

Practically, the findings provide important insights for cosmetic companies and digital marketers. Companies can enhance consumer engagement by implementing branding strategies that emphasize cultural relevance and emotional closeness with local consumers. In addition, hard selling strategies such as discounts, flash sales, and influencer promotions can be optimized to encourage faster purchasing decisions. However, companies should also maintain transparency and product credibility to avoid consumer skepticism toward influencer endorsements and brand authenticity.

The results are also useful for marketers seeking to understand contemporary consumer behavior in digital marketplaces. Consumers are increasingly influenced by visual persuasion, emotional branding, and promotional urgency, especially in industries driven by social media exposure such as cosmetics and skincare.

4. Research Limitations

This research acknowledges several limitations. Primarily, the participant pool was restricted to 100 individuals predominantly from Semarang, which constrains the applicability of the results to larger demographics across Indonesia. Variations in consumer behavior are likely in different areas due to disparities in culture, economy, and population characteristics (Anantyo et al., 2023). Secondly, the research depended on self-reported questionnaire responses, which could be influenced by subjective bias as participants

replied based on their own views and experiences. This may impact the precision of the gathered data. Thirdly, the focus of this investigation was solely on counterfeit local branding, aggressive selling techniques, product appeal, and purchasing choices. Other significant factors, such as brand loyalty, product caliber, influencer trustworthiness, consumer ethnocentrism, and online word-of-mouth were omitted from the study. These elements could potentially play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchasing habits within the cosmetic sector. Lastly, since the study employed a cross-sectional framework, information was gathered at a singular moment. Consequently, it was unable to track shifts in consumer behavior over extended durations. Future research is encouraged to incorporate larger and more varied samples, integrate additional factors, and utilize longitudinal or mixed-method strategies to offer a more thorough insight into consumer purchasing behaviors in digital cosmetics markets (Irfansyah, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This research investigated how fake local branding and hard selling strategies affect product interest and purchasing decisions among consumers of Skintific cosmetic products in Semarang. The findings revealed that fake local branding has a positive and significant influence on both product interest and purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to show greater attraction and trust toward products that appear culturally close and relevant to local needs. In addition, hard selling strategies such as discounts, flash sales, influencer promotions, and persuasive calls to action were also found to significantly increase product interest and encourage faster purchasing decisions. Furthermore, product interest exerts a significant influence on purchasing decisions and serves as an intervening variable linking marketing strategies with consumer behavior. These findings indicate that branding adaptation and aggressive digital promotion play important roles in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior within the cosmetics industry.

The study contributes theoretically by integrating fake local branding, hard selling, product interest, and purchasing decisions into a unified analytical framework within the context of digital cosmetic marketing. The findings strengthen theories related to brand localization and persuasive communication by demonstrating that emotional closeness and promotional urgency effectively influence consumer behavior. Practically, the results suggest that cosmetic companies should develop culturally adaptive branding strategies and

optimize digital promotional approaches to enhance consumer engagement and purchasing decisions. At the same time, companies need to maintain transparency and credibility to sustain long-term consumer trust.

While this research presents valuable insights, it also has notable drawbacks. The participant pool was restricted to 100 individuals in Semarang, limiting the applicability of the results to wider consumer demographics. Furthermore, the study leaned on self-administered survey data, which could reflect personal biases. Additionally, the investigation centered solely on counterfeit local branding, aggressive sales tactics, product appeal, and buying choices, excluding other potentially significant factors like brand loyalty, product excellence, influencer authority, digital word-of-mouth, or consumer nationalism. The snapshot nature of the design hindered the examination of shifts in consumer behavior over time. Considering these constraints, it is suggested that forthcoming research should involve larger and more varied participant groups from diverse regions across Indonesia to enhance applicability. Future studies could also integrate extra factors linked to digital marketing and consumer behavior psychology to deliver a more thorough insight into purchasing trends within the cosmetics sector. Moreover, upcoming researchers should consider utilizing longitudinal or mixed-method strategies to investigate how branding methods and marketing initiatives affect consumer behavior over extended periods and within various market environments.

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