

UNCOVERING THE ROLE OF MICRO INFLUENCERS AND STORYTELLING IN BUILDING GREEN BRAND PERCEPTION: A STUDY ON GEN Z CONSUMERS IN THE ECO-FRIENDLY COSMETICS INDUSTRY (SKINTIFIC)

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Abstract

This research aims to uncover the role of *micro influencers* and *storytelling* in building *green brand perception* in Generation Z consumers in the eco-friendly cosmetics industry, especially in the Skintific brand. With increasing consumer awareness of environmental issues, cosmetic brands that carry the concept of eco-friendliness need to develop effective communication strategies in order to form a positive image in the eyes of young consumers. The research method used was quantitative with a survey approach using a questionnaire distributed to Gen Z respondents who had used *Skintific* products. Data analysis was carried out using SEM-PLS to test the relationships between variables. The results of the study show that *micro influencers* significantly influence authentic and engaging *storytelling*, which then contributes to increasing *green brand perception* among Gen Z. This research provides practical contributions for eco-friendly cosmetics industry players in designing more effective digital marketing strategies through collaboration with *micro influencers* and the use of *storytelling* to strengthen *green brand perception* in the young market.

Keywords: *Micro Influencer; Storytelling; Green Brand Perception; GenZ; and Skintific.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, awareness of sustainability in the cosmetics industry has increased rapidly, especially among Generation Z. These young consumers are increasingly concerned about products that are safe, free from harmful chemicals, and do not harm the environment (Smith & Williams, 2023). This trend has prompted many *beauty brands* to adopt marketing strategies that focus on *green brand perception*, although not all *brands* are actually implementing strong sustainability practices (*Sustainable Brand Index*, 2022).

One of the brands that attracts attention is Skintific, a *skincare brand* that carries the concept of *clean beauty* with claims of *cruelty-free*, *paraben-free*, and *alcohol-free*. Although it does not explicitly carry the concept of *sustainability* like *Sensatia Botanicals* or *The Body Shop*, Skintific has managed to build an image as a "safe" and "good for the skin" brand, two elements that are often associated with green brands (Kim & Ko, 2023). This begs the question: Do consumers really see Skintific as a *green brand*, or is this just a clever marketing strategy?

One of the factors that plays an important role in shaping this perception is *micro-influencers*. Unlike *mega-influencers* or celebrities, *micro-influencers* are more trusted by Gen Z because they are considered more authentic and *relatable* (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). By using storytelling strategies, *micro-influencers* can create a narrative that supports *the brand's* image as "eco-friendly" even though it is not entirely so (Green & Brock, 2022).

This study will explore how *micro-influencers* and *storytelling* play a role in building *green brand perception* of Skintific among Gen Z consumers in the cosmetics industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Micro influencers are individuals who have a relatively small to medium number of followers on social media, generally ranging from 1,000 to 100,000 followers, but have a high engagement *rate* with their audience (Veirman et al., 2017). Compared to celebrities or *macro influencers*, *micro influencers* are considered more authentic, *relatable*, and trusted because of their closeness to their followers.

Storytelling marketing is an approach in marketing communication that uses narratives or stories to convey a brand *message* to the audience. This approach aims to build emotional connections, increase engagement, and strengthen consumers' recollection of brands (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2020). Compared to a one-way form of informative communication, *storytelling* offers a more personalized and meaningful experience for consumers.

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Various studies in the last five years confirm the importance of the role of micro-influencers and storytelling in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions towards eco-friendly cosmetics brands, especially Skintific. Prativi (2025) found that micro-influencers significantly influence purchasing decisions through the mediation of customer trust on the TikTok platform. Similarly, Putri and Maivalinda (2024) show that beauty vlogger reviews on TikTok have a positive impact on Gen Z's buying interest in Skintific products. However, Yanti and Lu (2025) revealed that influencer marketing is partially insignificant, but simultaneously still contributes to purchasing decisions along with brand image and promotion. Meanwhile, Sinurat and Simanjuntak (2024) highlight the importance of authentic and relevant marketing content in building Gen Z loyalty, although the results show that hanya keterlibatan merek yang berpengaruh signifikan. Selain itu, Penny dan Makaba (2024) emphasized that influencer marketing and online customer reviews also affect interest in buying Skintific products on the Shopee e-commerce platform. These findings reinforce the argument that digital strategies that focus on micro-influencers and credible brand narratives are effective approaches in building green brand perceptions among Gen Z.

Based on the literature review and the theoretical basis that has been studied, several relationships between variables that are suspected to be influential in this study are formulated. For this reason, the following hypotheses are proposed as provisional answers to the research problem:

H1: *Micro influencers* have a positive and significant influence on *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers in the *Skintific eco-friendly cosmetics industry*.

H2: *Storytelling* has a positive and significant influence on *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers in the eco-friendly cosmetics industry *Skintific*

RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a quantitative approach with a survey design to analyze the role of *micro influencers* and *storytelling* in building *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers, especially students of Siliwangi University (UNSIL) (Creswell, 2014). The population in this study is all UNSIL students who belong to generation Z and have experience using Skintific eco-friendly cosmetic products. The sampling technique used is *snowball sampling*, which is a non-probability sampling method where the initial respondent recommends other respondents who meet the research criteria until the desired number of samples is achieved (Noy, 2018). The research sample is targeted at 384 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires arranged based on research variables using a Likert scale of 1–5. The questionnaire instrument was tested for validity and reliability to ensure the quality of the data. Data analysis was carried out using *Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares* (SEM-PLS) approach which is suitable for studies with

medium sample sizes and data that do not have to be normally distributed (Hair et al., 2017). This research was conducted in the UNSIL campus environment for three months. The validity of the research results was maintained through testing the validity of the construct, reliability, and evaluation of the SEM-PLS model with *goodness of fit* indicators and *path coefficient values* (Hair et al., 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To find out the effect, processing was carried out using *the PLS SEM* Model. The data calculation process was carried out using the SmartPLS Version 4 program with the following results.

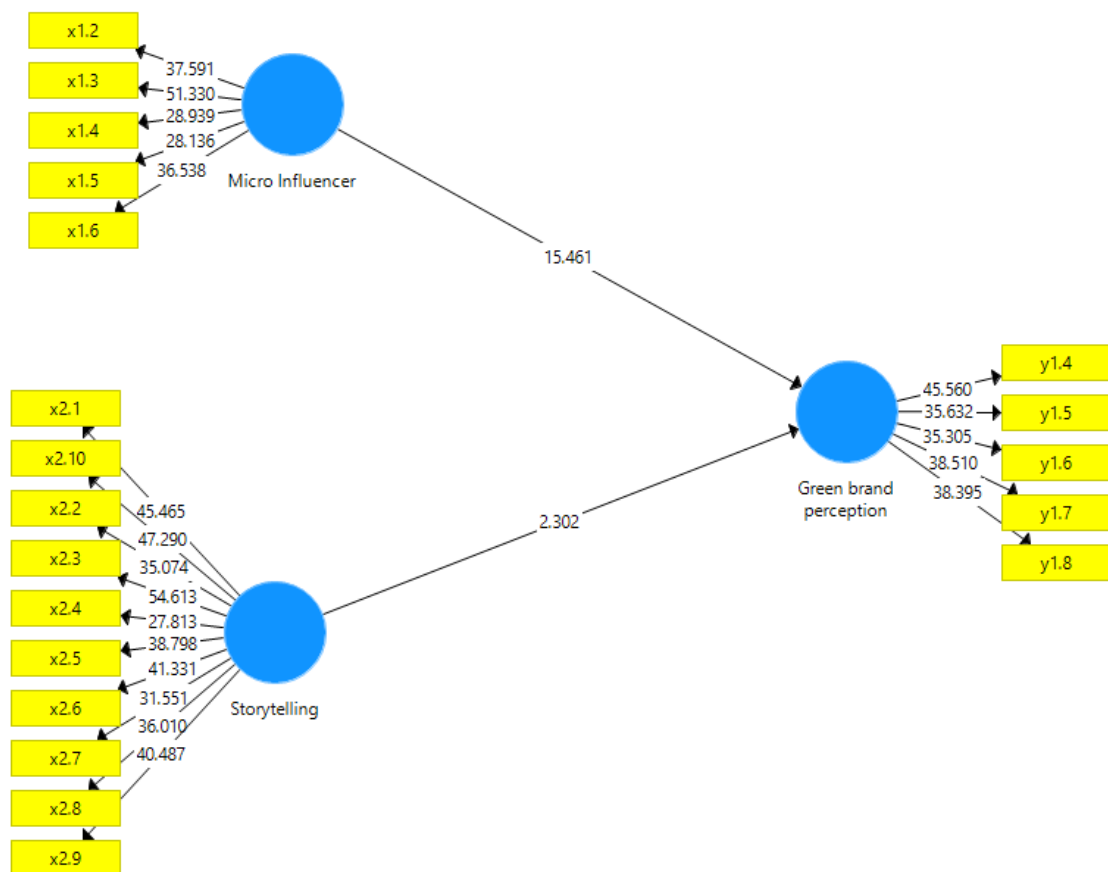


Figure 1 Bootstrapping Process Results

The model has gone through external model tests, including *convergent validity*, *Average Variant Extracted (AVE)*, *discriminant validity*, and *composite reliability*. After going through the outer model test, it was then continued with the inner model test. The evaluation stage of the structural model (*inner model*) consists of a model fit test and a hypothesis test. The model goodness test was carried out by paying attention to *the R-square* value (R²). Hypothesis testing is partially carried out by paying attention to the significance value of the relationship between variables (*direct effects*).

Tabel 1. Nilai R-Square

Variabel Endogen	R-Square	Kriteria
<i>Green brand perception</i>	0,750	Kuat

Source: SmartPLS processed data, 2025

Based on the table, it can be seen that the *R-square* value of the endogenous variable green brand perception is 0.750. This value explains that the power of *micro influencer* and *storytelling* variables in predicting green brand perception is 75%.

Furthermore, through the results of the *P-Value* obtained if the *P-Value* value in each variable < 0.05, H0 is rejected. The positive influence can be seen through the *Original Sample* (O). The results of the direct influence test can be seen as follows.

Tabel 2. Direct Effect Hypothesis Test Results through *Path Coefficient of Bootstrapping Technique*

	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample Mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T Statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P Values</i>
<i>Micro Influencer - > Green brand perception</i>	0.750	0.749	0.048	15.461	0.000
<i>Storytelling -> Green brand perception</i>	0.130	0.128	0.057	2.302	0.022

Source: SmartPLS processed data, 2025

The Influence of *Micro Influencers* on *Green Brand Perception* in *Gen Z Consumers* in the Skintific *Eco-Friendly Cosmetics Industry*

The results of the analysis show that the influence of *Micro influencers* on *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers is positive and significant. Because the results of the t-statistical hypothesis test are larger than the ttable (1.98) which is 15.461 with a magnitude of influence of 0.750 and a *p-value* of $0.000 < 0.05$. so it can be concluded that *Micro influencers* have a positive and significant effect on *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers in the Skintific eco-friendly cosmetics industry.

These results are in line with a study by Lim et al. (2020) which showed that *micro influencers* have a strong influence in shaping the perception of green brands due to their high levels of engagement and audience trust. Research by Lou and Yuan (2019) also proves that sustainable content delivered by micro influencers can improve the image of brands that care about the environment. Thus, the role of *micro influencers* is one of the effective strategies in strengthening *green brand perception*, especially in the Gen Z consumer segment.

The Influence of *Storytelling* on *Green Brand Perception* on *Gen Z Consumers* in the Skintific *Eco-Friendly Cosmetics Industry*.

The results of the analysis show that the influence of *storytelling* on *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers is positive and significant. Because the results of the t-statistical hypothesis test are larger than the table (1.98), which is 2.302 with a magnitude of influence of 0.130 and a *p-value* of $0.022 < 0.05$. so it can be concluded that *storytelling* has a positive and significant effect on *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers in the Skintific eco-friendly cosmetics industry.

The results of this study are in line with previous research by Pera et al. (2016) also showed that *storytelling* that raises the theme of sustainability increases positive perceptions of brands because consumers feel closer and have values that are in line with the brand. Thus, *storytelling* becomes a communication strategy that not only conveys information, but also creates emotional engagement and trust that ultimately shapes the perception of green brands significantly among Gen Z.

The results of this study show that *micro influencers* and *storytelling* have a positive and significant effect on *green brand perception* in Gen Z consumers in the Skintific eco-friendly

cosmetics industry. This indicates that communication through credible public figures and brand narratives that prioritize sustainability values can form a positive perception of environmentally friendly brands. The practical implications of these findings are the importance for *Skintific* and similar brands to maximize the role of *micro influencers* close to Gen Z audiences and develop *storytelling* strategies that consistently emphasize ethical and environmental values through social media. However, this study has limitations because it was only conducted on Gen Z in certain regions and has not considered other variables that can also affect the perception of green brands. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand geographical coverage, add variables such as *green trust* or *brand credibility*, and consider qualitative approaches to delve deeper into consumer perception of eco-friendly brand communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

To support its claim to being an environmentally friendly product, Skintific needs to ensure that its product specifications reflect sustainability principles. This can be done through the use of recyclable and biodegradable-based packaging, the reduction of single-use plastics, and the use of non-toxic water-based printing inks. In addition, product raw materials should come from renewable natural sources, such as organic plant extracts, without the content of harmful chemicals such as parabens, sulfates, and synthetic alcohols. Skintific can also add certification labels such as "cruelty-free" and "vegan" from independent institutions to increase consumer confidence in the brand's sustainability commitments.

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