

## TRUST AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE: KEY DRIVERS OF CONTINUOUS USE OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

The research explores the factors influencing Indonesians' intentions to reuse alternative medicine to manage health issues, including trust, social influence, health benefits, and continuous intention. This study is grounded in the theory of the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) perspective, which explains research phenomena. To achieve the research objectives, the analytical descriptive approach was followed by developing a questionnaire and distributing it to the study sample of 200 respondents from those who use alternative medicine in Purwokerto City. Methods were used in the partial least squares structural equation modelling with Smartpls4 software to process data. The study showed a set of results, the most prominent being a statistically significant effect on continuous intention at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) of social influence, trust, and health benefit. This study demonstrated that trust, health benefits, and social influence are key drivers of the continued use of alternative medicine. The findings of this paper can contribute to a better understanding of consumer behaviour towards alternative medicine, enabling healthcare practitioners and policymakers to develop targeted strategies for promoting alternative medicine.

**Keywords:** Herbal Medicine, continuous intention, Health Issues, Theory

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### INTRODUCTION

Many believe that herbal products do not negatively impact health because they do not contain chemicals, and increasing demand for herbal medicines has become a promising business opportunity in developing the processing industry, so many herbal medicine manufacturers have sprung up. (Khayru, and Issalillah, 2021). The world market value of the herbal industry steadily increased from 2010 to 2021, driven by rising demand, with an annual return of USD 29.5 to USD 40 million (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Indonesia's pharmaceutical and herbal products market from 2020 to 2022 is estimated to have reached around IDR. 100 trillion with 12 to 13 per cent annual growth (Adiarso et al., 2020; V.B. Kusnandar, 2022). Other data also indicate that the value and development of the gross domestic product in the chemical, pharmaceutical, and traditional medicine industries continued to increase from 2018 to 2021, reaching approximately US\$4.79 billion. Competition in the traditional medicine (TM) market is growing partly due to the influx of complementary and alternative medicines (Novitasari et al., 2022). According to the previous report on standard oral nutritional supplements in the hospital setting, dietary supplements generally produce cost savings. They are cost-effective inpatient groups with variable ages, nutritional statuses, and underlying conditions (Elia et al., 2016). By understanding the behaviour of potential consumers in the company's market, especially within the marketing division, it is easier to design effective marketing programs to increase product sales (Ferrinadewi, 2004). Some of these factors often go unnoticed by marketers, but they must be considered to understand how these consumer behaviour factors influence purchasing decisions (Khasanah et al., 2010). The results showed that the direct influences are not statistically significant, indicating a need for mediation between social influence on continuous intention to purchase herbal medicine (Elfadil et al., 2023). Previous studies by Ly et al. (2022) demonstrated the direct social influence, rather than support, on continuous usage, which

facilitates the purchase of alternative products. A prior study by Tam et al. (2020) found that social influence does not directly predict continuous intention. Previous gaps explored what factors, supported by social influence, contribute to consumers' continued intention to use alternative medicine for health conditions. Prior research by Padel and Foster (2005) which revealed that social directly not influence on continuous intention to satisfaction in repurchase intention and the desire to pay a premium price for consumption of herbal medicine to control health conditions, the findings indicate that direct effect of social influence on reused of alternative medicine is not significant. Based on the results testing the impact and relationship between consumer attitude and purchase intention toward alternative medicine, it can be seen that the acquisition of a significant value higher than 0.05 is equal to, with a critical value, means consumer attitude cannot influence on consumer purchase intentions of alternative medicine (Wiwoho, & Riptiono, 2022). Previous studies primarily examined the direct effects of factors (social influence, attitudes) on satisfaction and purchase intentions, while this research expands to explore trust as a mediator for continuous intention. This paper focused on Trust. Unlike previous studies, the research highlights trust as a central element that could bridge the gap between social influences and continuous intention to consume herbal medicine.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

### Theories

The stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory was proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) to explain how the external environment affects people's cognition and behaviour. Stimulus refers to the external factors. That can stimulate individuals and influence their behaviour. The organism is manifested in its attitude and cognitive state. Attitude is the individual's emotional and cognitive response to stimulation, and cognition is the process of perceiving and interpreting stimulation (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Response refers to an individual's approach or avoidance behaviour after receiving a stimulus (Kim et al., 2020). Based on the SOR theory, this study regards the outpatient experience as an "external stimulus," the consumers' trust as the attitudes and perceptions of the "organism," and the willingness to get healthy as the "response" (Chen & Zhang, 2020). Stimulus refers to the external factors that can influence an individual. The model assumes that different external stimuli affect a person's internal state and thus determine the person's decision-making behaviour. Donovan and Rossiter first applied the SOR model in a retail environment to investigate the impact of the retail store environment on customer purchasing behaviour (Zhou et al., 2022). Zhou applied the SOR model to investigate how platform characteristics, knowledge characteristics, and contributor characteristics in the knowledge payment market serve as stimuli to influence consumers' perceived value and, consequently, their willingness to purchase (Yu & Zhang, 2022).

### Herbal Medicine

Herbal medicine is defined by the World Health Organisation (2005) as herbs, materials, preparations, and herbal products that contain parts of plants or other plant materials as active ingredients, as well as animal products. Some pharmaceutical medicines are based on a single active ingredient derived from a plant source (WHO, 2014-2023). Herbal medicine is the oldest form of healthcare known to humans and has been used in all cultures throughout history (Barnes et al., 2007). According to Law 23/1992 on Health, Traditional medicine is part of the healthcare system. It must be promoted to ensure it is effective, safe, and of good quality for use in community healthcare. Herbal medicine encompasses raw or processed plant materials and herbal products derived from plants that offer medicinal benefits to humans (WHO, 2007).

### Social Influence

Social influence refers to the impact of significant others' perceptions, such as family or friends, on consumer decision-making regarding the continuous use of alternative medicine for managing health issues (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2011). In the context of the increasing

socialisation of trust, sometimes customers use products to gain the approval of socially perceived benefits (Tao et al., 2009). Social influence can influence people's intentions and decision-making (Kalia et al., 2022). For example, consumer recommendations on social media directly influence customers' buying and recommending purchase behaviours, intention (Arrieta, Pena, and Medina, 2018), and form trust in products' benefits and brands of herbal medicine (Hung, Cheng, and Lee, 2021). Previous studies have empirically shown that social influence positively affects users to adopt benefits and healthcare-related herbal medicine (Talukder et al., 2019; Gao et al., 2015; Miltgen et al., 2013; Canhoto & Arp, 2017; Choi & Kim, 2016; Buenaflor & Kim, 2013; Yang et al., 2016; and Sergueeva et al., 2020). Social influence depends on consumer experience and trust, as it is influenced by the health benefits of herbal medicine in addressing various health issues. Based on the previous findings, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

***H1: Social influence has a positive effect on Trust in herbal medicine.***

#### **Health Benefits**

Perceived benefit also increased consumers' desire to purchase herbal medicine. In a study conducted on college students regarding healthy food and the basics of the HBM, it was reported that perception of a high benefit along with a low barrier resulted in an overall increase (behavior) in consuming healthy food and being physically active (Kim, Ahn, and No, J., 2012). Trust in offline and online medical information affects cognitive, affective, and behavioural health outcomes (Ye & Y., 2010). Health benefits influence information exchange and shape an individual's choices. Trust also plays a role in health benefits and information utilisation, promoting the effectiveness of interactive communication about products or services, from which trust is born (Thiede, 2005). Social engagement has been a recent focus, with the most recent developments emerging from the study of trust in the health benefits of products (Brodie et al., 2011 and Iliac, 2013). Influence of Exposures, Benefits, and Barriers Toward Herbal Medicine Behaviour (Alversia, 2019). Cognitive benefits are demonstrated through customer consumption of the product or service, an optimal experience, intrinsic enjoyment, and evaluation, such as sharing information about health benefits, trust, and satisfaction with the product or service. While emotional signifies an affective connection between the user and the object (Hollebeek, 2011; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). An increasing number of consumers are turning to health as a source of treatment information and to aid in behaviour change (Liefers et al., 2014; Schoeppe et al., 2016). Based on the previous findings, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

***H2: Health benefit has a positive effect on Trust in herbal medicine***

#### **Trust**

Trust can be related to the expectations that exist in consumers, where the hope lies in fulfilling their desires through specific products (Munuera et al., 2018). Previous literature has demonstrated that consumer trust significantly impacts consumption intention (Hapsari et al., 2020; Rinuastuti & Saufi, 2021). This study's results align with previous research, which found that consumer trust significantly influences continuous intention (Agyei et al., 2020). This information will enhance consumer preferences when the product's composition is known (Bradu et al., 2014). Research by Dumortier, Evans, and Martin (2017) suggests that trust in a brand can be a key factor in determining consumer purchasing decisions. Trust has always been crucial in influencing consumer behaviour and is highly significant in forming continuous intentions (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999). Trust in a product refers to the product meeting expectations, with its appearance and functionality consistent with its publicity and flawless after-sales service (Zhou & Fan, 2021). Consumer trust fosters confidence in a product's reliability, ability to meet expectations, and the provision of promised benefits, thereby creating a solid foundation for repurchase intention (Hajli et al., 2017). Furthermore, consumers will be more willing to continue purchasing if they believe that companies producing high-quality products provide them with authentic and reliable information and are willing to protect their interests (Zhang et al., 2023). Based on the previous findings, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

***H3: Trust has a positive effect on continuous intention***

## Continuous Intention

Consumers' continued intention to use herbal medicine to manage health issues measures the degree to which a product meets or exceeds expectations (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011; Lovelock & Witz, 2016). Oliver (1981) considers customer loyalty an emotional response to a business. Research has shown that consumer perceptions, including perceived usefulness, perceived value, and reliability, can significantly impact consumers' intentions to continue purchasing (Zhao et al., 2015). The indicators of continuous intention including: Strong conviction and positive attitudes toward the efficacy and benefits of herbal medicine, Brown, and Garcia, (2020), expressed plans or commitment to continue using herbal remedies in the future, World Health Organization, (2019), choosing herbal traditional medication for specific health concerns, (Adams, K. et al. 2018). Continues intention when consumer expectations are matched by perceived performance from product or service (Consumer Behaviour, An Asia Pacific Approach, 2006). Oliver (1981) considers customer satisfaction an emotional response to the business. found that social, trust, and perceived benefits are the most critical factors influencing determinants of continued purchase intention, based on S-OR theory (Huang et al., 2020). Based on the previous findings, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

***H4: Trust mediates the relationship between health benefits on continuous intention***

***H5: Trust mediates the relationship between social influence on continuous intention***

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research used a quantitative method: a survey, an effective way to measure progress. In this case, the population was individuals who needed or were interested in using herbal medicine to treat or manage health issues. The study included 200 respondents with the target of testing the established hypothesis. The location was Purwokerto City. Data was collected utilising offline and online questionnaires from November 2024 to January 2025. The research instrument was developed and adopted from previous studies. The measurement scale uses a five-point Likert scale, where 1 States strongly disagree and 5 states strongly agree. To measure destination social influences, four items were used adopted from (Singh & Verma, 2017; Arrieta et al., 2018; Li et al., 2006), to measure destination health benefits, five items were used adopted from (Inman & Tong et al.,2012), to measure trust five items were used adopted from (Magneto, 2015; Oppong et al.,2023), to measure continuous intention, five items were used adopted from (Garcia & Brown, 2020; WHO, 2019 & Adams, K. et al. 2018). Data analysis Techniques: Demographic characteristics were analysed using descriptive analysis with IBM SPSS software, while partial least squares structural equation modelling with Smartpls4 software was used to test the causal relationship between constructs. Validity testing used construct validity, namely discriminant validity, cross-loading, and average variance extracted (Fornell & Larcker,1981), while reliability testing used internal consistency, namely Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Cronbach, 1951; Nunally, 1978).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic characteristics were analysed using descriptive statistics. This study's respondents are consumers who use alternative medicine. Based on Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents. This study found that most respondents were females and males aged 17 to 25. Most respondents use alternative medicine because they have been influenced by individuals and family members who endorse it.

### Construct Reliability

Reliability construct assessment can be evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for each construct. The recommended values for composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha are more significant than 0.70. However, in development research, where the loading factor limit used is low (0.05), composite reliability values and low Cronbach's alpha are still

acceptable as long as the requirements for discriminant convergent validity are met. Based on the analysis results in Table 2, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceed 0.70, indicating that all constructs meet the reliability criteria.

#### Outer Loading

The outer loading Table 3 results show the validity of respondents' answers to all the questionnaire items. This information was collected from consumers' behaviours, attitudes, and expectations about who consumes herbal medicine to treat diseases or manage health issues. This explains why the consumer's behaviour, attitudes, experience, and expectations positively affect reuse and the intention to consume herbal medicine.

#### Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is carried out to state that each latent variable concept is not the same as the other variables. Based on the results of Table 4, the discriminant validity test, the VAVE value of all constructs exceeds the construct coefficient  $t$  with other constructs, so it can be concluded that all PLS model constructs are supported by discriminant validity. Apart from using the Fornell-Larcker method, discriminant validity can also be assessed by examining the cross-loading value of each indicator on the construct. An indicator is considered valid according to the discriminant validity criteria if its cross-loading on the construct is higher than the cross-loading value of the indicator on other constructs.

#### Test the Direct Effect Hypothesis by Bootstrapping

Based on Table 5 and the test results, a health benefit positively affected trust. The results showed a  $p$ -value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), a  $T$ -statistic of 12.106 ( $> 1.96$ ), and a path coefficient of 0.590, indicating a positive relationship when the health benefits variable is higher. Social influences positively affected trust, resulting in a  $p$ -value of 0.000  $< 0.05$  and a  $T$ -statistic of 8.423  $> 1.96$ . The path coefficient is positive at 0.405, indicating that a higher value corresponds to an increased intention to consume alternative medicine under social influence. Trust has a positive effect on continuous intention, as evidenced by a  $p$ -value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), a  $T$ -statistic of 99.489 ( $T > 1.96$ ), and a path coefficient of 0.953. When trust is higher, it directly increases the consumption of herbal medicine.

#### Indirect Effects (Mediation)

The result indirect effect in shows that on Table 6, analysis research model in indirect effect the pathway of health benefits on trust through continuous intention, the  $P$ -value obtained is 0.000,  $T$  Statistic 12.189, and coefficients 0.562, because the  $P$  value obtained is  $< 0.05$ ,  $T$  statistic  $> 1.96$  and the path coefficient is positive effects, the conclusion is that health benefits indirectly effects on continuous intention by trust mediation variables. Indirect effect pathway of social influence on trust through consumer, the  $P$  value obtained is 0.000,  $T$  Statistic 8.295, and coefficients 0.386, because the  $P$  -value obtained is  $< 0.05$ ,  $T$  statistic  $> 1.96$  and the path coefficient is positive effects, the conclusion is that social influence indirectly effect on continuous intention by trust is mediation variables.

Our study contributes to the priority of service science research to understand customer value cocreation for improved well-being (Ostrom et al., 2010). Specifically, our research contributes to logic and the transformative research agenda in several essential ways. The first finding of this study is that social influence significantly impacts the intention to continue using herbal medicine. This result measured indicators, including the consumption of herbal medicine by close friends and family (Singh & Verma, 2017). These results also supported previous research, namely Budiyanto (2005), indicating that herbal medicines do not harm our health. The following finding is that social influence has a significant effect on trust. This result is compared to previous findings, including personal experiences, my friends' stories and testimonials about herbal medicine, and my engagement due to feedback about the outcomes (Magneto, 2015). These results supported previous research, namely Venkatesh (2012) and Sun (2013). The following finding is that health benefits significantly affect continuous intention. This result is based on previous research indicators, as I have been constantly examining my health conditions, as noted in Udomkitmongkol (2016) and Singh and

Verma (2017). Herbal medicine helps me to look confident, Inman (2012). The following finding is that health benefits have a significant effect on trust. These results support previous research, such as that conducted by Tong et al. (2012) and Muthukrishnaveni and Muruganandam (2013), which stated that the health benefits of herbal medicine had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. This result was supported by previous studies by Suryadi et al. (2018). The following finding is that trust has a significant impact on continuous intention. These results are supported by previous studies from Wang et al., (2019). Previous literature has demonstrated that consumer trust significantly impacts consumption intention (Hapsari et al., 2020; Mahdi et al., 2021). This result is supported by previous research indicators, such as the extent of sharing personal experiences, sharing stories and testimonials, and sharing feedback about the perceived effectiveness of the outcomes (Magneto, 2015). The second finding is that trust significantly affects the mediation of health benefits on continuous intention. This result is supported by previous research on actively sharing information (Ennew & Binks, 1999). The following finding is that trust significantly affects the mediation of social influence on continuous intention. This result is supported by previous studies, notably Yi and Gong's (2012) work, highlighting consumer information-seeking as a core aspect of customer participation behaviour, significantly impacting customer-perceived value.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the previous discussion, it can be concluded that social influence, health benefits, and trust have positive direct and indirect effects on continuous intention. The research will increase people's interest in consuming herbal medicine while providing information about the factors influencing consumers' decisions to use herbal medicine, thereby benefiting healthcare practitioners and pharmacists. This strategy involves cooperation between consumers and herbal product companies or industries, aiming to solve gaps identified in previous research. Additionally, the research focused on the relationship between consumer loyalty and the quality of herbal medicine, emphasising value and support provided. The future research, it is hoped, will focus on herbal medicines that may pose safety concerns, including interactions with conventional medications, allergic reactions, and potential toxicity. Conduct systematic safety evaluations and pharmacovigilance studies to monitor adverse events associated with using herbal medicines. Educate healthcare professionals and consumers about the potential risks and benefits, and promote responsible use practices.

## Figures

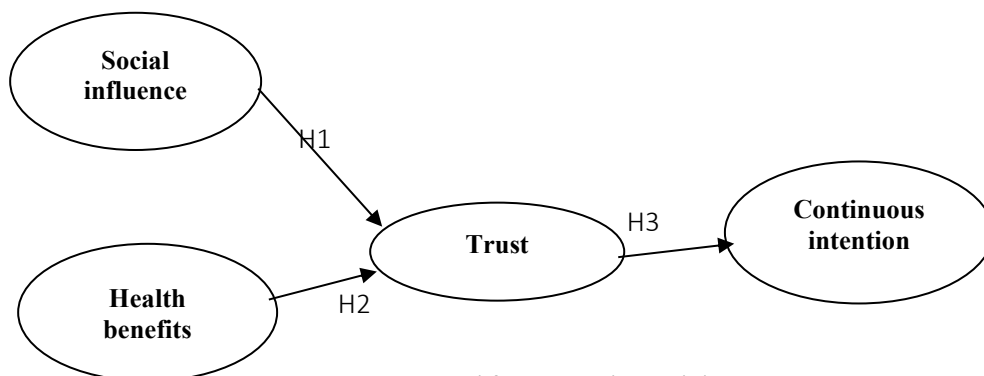


Figure 1. Modify Research Models

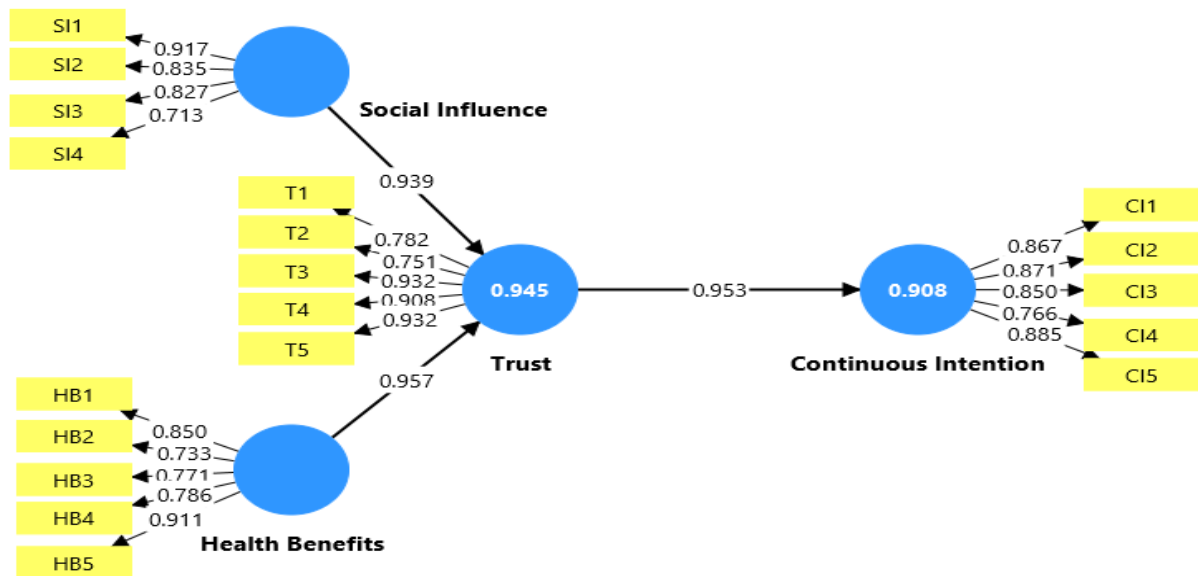


Figure 2. Analysis Data by SEM-PLS

Tables

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

No.	Characteristics of respondents	Options	Total	percentage
1.	Gender	Male	90	44%
		Female	110	56%
		Total	200	100,00
2.	Age	17- 25 Years	130	62,00%
		26 - 35 Years	25	13,00%
		36 - 45 Years	20	10,00%
		46 - 55 Years	12	6.40%
		> 56 Years	13	8.60%
	Total	200	100,00	
3.	Education	Junior High School,	15	10,00%
		Senior high school,	25	13,34%
		Diploma,	19	10,66%
		Bachelor,	70	26,67%
		Postgraduate,	19	12.66%
		Others	40	26.67%
	Total	200	100,00	
4.	Occupation	Student,	118	73,33%
		Private Employee	30	4,67%
		Public Servant	20	6,67%
		Self-employed Others	20	10,00%
			12	5,33%
	Total	200	100,00	

Source: Table source from demographics research respondents

**Table 2, Construct Reliability**

Latent Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho-a)	Composite Reliability (Rho-C)	Reliability
Continuous intention	0.902	0.907	0.928	Reliable
Health Benefits	0.870	0.884	0.906	Reliable
Social influence	0.842	0.862	0.895	Reliable
Trust	0.913	0.922	0.936	Reliable

Source: Table source analysis data reliability by SEM-PLS

**Table 3, Outer Loading of Validity**

Items	CI	HB	SI	T	Validity
I plan to continue using herbal medicine to maintain my health.	0.867				Valid
I am committed to continuing to use herbal medicine.	0.871				Valid
I will inform everyone about the efficacy of herbal medicine.	0.850				valid
I would recommend that my loved ones consume herbal medicine	0.766				valid
I will try to use herbal medicines regularly.	0.885				valid
Herbal medicine has improved my health.		0.850			valid
Herbal medicine helped my confidence.		0.733			valid
I feel the direct benefits of herbal medicines.		0.771			valid
Herbal medicine can improve my body's energy.		0.786			valid
I believe taking herbal medicine can help improve my body's resistance to various diseases.		0.911			valid
Mass media, such as television and radio channels, influenced me to buy herbal medicine.			0.917		valid
My doctor advised me to buy herbal medicine for the treatment of the disease.			0.835		valid
Many people have persuaded me to buy herbal medicine to maintain my health.			0.827		valid
I consume on the advice of family and friends who also consume herbal medicine.			0.713		valid
I believe the information stating that herbal medicine has health benefits is accurate.				0.782	valid
I believe in the quality of herbal medicines.				0.751	valid
I believe in the safety of herbal medicines.				0.932	valid
I believe in the efficacy of herbal medicines to maintain body energy.				0.908	valid
The health benefits of herbal medicines motivate me to continue using.				0.932	valid

Resource: Table from outer loading of validity indicators or items by SEM-PLS

**Table 4, Discriminant Validity- Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

Latent Variable	CI	HB	SI	T
Continuous intention	0.849			
Health Benefits	0.928	0.813		
Social Influence	0.934	0.905	0.826	
Trust	0.953	0.957	0.939	0.865

Resource: Table from analysis data validity variables latent by SEM-PLS

**Table 5. Direct Effects Path Coefficients - Mean, STDEV, T Values, Hypothesis**

Latent Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Description
HB -> T	0.590	0.593	0.049	12.106	0.000	Supported
SI -> T	0.405	0.403	0.048	8.423	0.000	Supported
T-> CI	0.953	0.953	0.010	99.489	0.000	Supported

Resource: Table source from direct test hypothesis, by Bootstrapping

**Table 6, Total Indirect Effects- Mean, STDEV, T Values, P Values**

Latent Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Description
HB-> T-> CI	0.562	0.565	0.046	12.189	0.000	Supported
SI-> T-> CI	0.386	0.385	0.047	8.295	0.000	Supported

Source: Table resource from indirect test of hypothesis by bootstrapping

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