

The impact of influencer marketing on generation Z's purchasing decision for beauty products in Vietnam



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Abstract By incorporating the theories of reasoned action, word of mouth, electronic word of mouth, and the brand identity model, this paper proposes a model including eight independent and two moderating factors to assess the impact of influencer marketing on Vietnamese Generation Z's purchasing decisions regarding beauty products. The model was evaluated via structural equation modeling on the basis of data collected from a survey of 1261 participants and in-depth interviews with 10 persons in Vietnam. The results revealed that influencers' trustworthiness is a critical factor shaping Vietnamese Generation Z's purchasing decisions, both directly and indirectly. However, the extent of this impact varies depending on the influencer's level of fame and the type of advertised product. While influencers' attractiveness and the information and entertainment value of the advertisement affect them indirectly through both moderating factors, influencers' relevance impacts purchasing decisions solely via brand image. On the basis of these findings, this paper asserts that beauty businesses operating in Vietnam should prioritize the selection of trustworthy influencers with healthy, positive, creative, and close-to-youth lifestyles. Additionally, businesses should actively engage in initiatives that strengthen the relationship between Generation Z and influencers, fostering deeper brand–consumer connections.

Keywords: trustworthiness, attractiveness, advertisement, relevance, branding

1. Introduction

In recent years, the explosion of social networks has created new trends in customer–brand interactions. Traditionally, marketing strategies were predominantly passive and one way, with brands shaping consumer perceptions through conventional media channels. However, contemporary marketing has shifted toward a two-way communication approach. Companies are now seeking channels to foster deeper connections, encouraging customers to engage with their stories, products, and services through interactive and dynamic social media platforms (SproutSocial, 2018; 2021). The rise of appealing and highly interactive content shared by nonfamous individuals in social media has sparked a trend where these individuals attract large followings and establish a strong voice within their communities. As a result, influencer marketing has gained significant attention not only from industry practitioners but also from academics, particularly with the emergence of individuals who can shape opinions and influence different communities (Ki & Kim, 2019; Ki et al., 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2022). Notably, many researchers have investigated the influential power of influencers, emphasizing the emotional bonds they form with their followers (Ladhari et al., 2020; Janssen et al., 2021). Compared with celebrities, influencers tend to have closer interaction with their audiences, and their shares are less negatively evaluated by the press. Consequently, their product and service recommendations are perceived as more customer-focused and authentic (Janssen et al., 2021), and influencer marketing is more widely applied by brands. According to a report by AspireIQ (2021), more than 90% of marketers conducted influencer marketing, and 76% planned to increase their budgets for such campaigns in the following year.

The prominence of Generation Z on social media has made influencer marketing a trend for brands desiring to capture young consumers. SproutSocial (2021) reported that 66% of surveyed Generation Z consumers admit that social media is an indispensable part of their lives, and 76% agree that it allows them to interact with brands and companies. According to Kastenholz (2021), social networks have been chosen by the vast majority (97%) of Generation Z consumers as their primary shopping channel. Given their tech-savvy nature, Generation Z consumers tend to be highly skeptical and selective in their purchasing decisions. As a result, influencer marketing, with its authenticity focus, has gradually become an effective bridge to connect brands and young consumers, especially in the beauty industry.

The global influencer marketing market experienced significant growth in 2023, tripling in size compared with that in 2019 and reaching USD 21.1 billion. It is expected to reach USD 24 billion at the end of 2024 (Statista, 2024). Although influencer marketing has newly evolved in Vietnam, it has been shown to be expanding quickly in alignment with the global trend, as



brands are increasingly utilizing local influencers to engage with the country's tech-savvy audience. 7SAT (2020) reported that up to 90% of Vietnamese customers believe in influencers' recommendations, and on average, an effective influencer marketing campaign can generate 6.5 times the revenue of its initial investment. In the same vein, REVU's 2024 report on influencer marketing in Vietnam revealed that 97% of respondents recognized its effectiveness, whereas over 87% believed it was particularly successful in attracting high-quality customers. In Vietnam, hence, influencer marketing is a channel favored by many beauty brands to strengthen their brand image and increase sales among young customers (Anymind, 2022). According to Deloitte (2021), the spending of Generation Z on beauty products has contributed substantially to the development of the beauty industry; therefore, these products are considered an important customer group of the industry. Although many prior works have explored various influencing-related factors affecting consumer outcomes, such as engagement, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions (Ki & Kim, 2019; Vrontis, et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2022), there remains a critical gap in empirical research specifically focused on the application of influencer marketing in Vietnam. A more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon is therefore essential for both academic knowledge and marketing practices.

Given the growing importance of influencer marketing in Vietnam's beauty industry, this paper aims to assess its impacts on Generation Z's purchasing decisions for beauty products and suggest practical implications for beauty businesses operating in Vietnam. The remaining sections of the paper are organized as follows. A review of past literature is presented in Section 2, and the methodology is explained in Section 3. In Section 4, the results and discussion are presented before some concluding remarks are provided in Section 5.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The impact of influencer marketing

An extensive literature review reveals that many prior studies have clarified the impact of influencer marketing on both businesses' and consumers' purchase behavior.

The majority of studies have demonstrated the positive impact of influencer marketing on brands. Karasiewicz and Kowalczyk (2014) concluded that in industries where the physical attractiveness of advertisers is a significant factor, such as the cosmetics sector, influencer marketing effectively enhances brand image. Similarly, Zak and Hasprova (2020) highlighted that influencer marketing is a highly effective and widely adopted advertising strategy, providing businesses with a competitive advantage and increasing brand sales. Consistent with these findings, Breves et al. (2019) noted that a strong alignment between influencers and brands not only strengthens influencers' reputations but also improves the overall effectiveness of advertising campaigns. These findings collectively highlight the strategic importance of influencer marketing in shaping brand perception and driving consumer engagement.

The literature has consistently established a strong relationship between influencer marketing and consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing behaviors, particularly among younger demographics. Lou and Yuan (2019) proposed a theoretical framework to examine the impact of influencers, focusing on the value and credibility of the messages they communicate. Their study revealed that the informational quality of influencer-generated content, combined with the trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived similarity between influencers and their followers, significantly enhances consumer trust in branded posts. This trust, in turn, serves as a key driver in shaping brand awareness and influencing purchase intentions. Narrowing down to a specific platform, Da Costa (2019) reported that influencer Instagram posts have a notable effect on the purchase intentions of young female consumers, highlighting the platform-specific effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior.

Expanding on these findings, Pham (2021) highlighted that the personal characteristics of influencers are the most critical determinants of young consumers' purchasing behaviors in Vietnam, followed by the entertainment value of advertisements and, to a lesser extent, influencer popularity. Other factors, such as content reliability and informational value, were also found to have a significant but comparatively lower impact on sales outcomes. More recent studies, including Nguyen et al. (2022), have further explored the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing decisions in Vietnam. Findings from these studies indicate that influencer credibility, expertise, entertainment value, and peer recommendations positively influence Generation Z consumer purchase intentions. Among these factors, peer recommendations emerged as the most impactful, differing slightly from Pham's (2021) conclusions. Despite these insights, the limited number of studies on influencer marketing in Vietnam underscore the need for further research with a more specific focus on industry-level variations to better understand how influencer marketing dynamics differ across sectors.

2.2. Factors affecting the purchase intention of beauty products

There is a wide consensus in the literature that the purchase intention of beauty products is influenced primarily by three key groups of factors: brand image, parasocial relationships, and influencer-related factors. With the same brand, each customer can have different brand perceptions, leading to different purchase intentions. Many studies have reported a positive

relationship between good brand image and the purchase decisions of cosmetic customers (Nurhandayani et al., 2019; Tjahjono et al., 2021).

First introduced in 1956 by two sociologists Horton & Wohl (1956), the concept of parasocial relationships was used to describe a one-sided, imagined relationship between an audience and artists in mass media. This one-way admiration can provide individuals with a sense of emotional fulfillment, allowing them to follow and admire idols without fear of rejection (Schramm & Wirth, 2010). In particular, with adolescents, one-way influence from idols tends to help shape their future image (Gleason et al., 2017). However, many researchers, such as Griffith et al. (2013) and de Bérail et al. (2019), have shown their concerns about the negative consequences of parasocial relationships, including causing depression, anxiety, antisociality, or social media addiction among young audiences.

Previous studies have attempted to determine the influencing factors affecting purchase intentions, categorizing them into seven critical factors: trustworthiness (Aggad & Ahmad, 2021; Chekima et al., 2020; Suprawan, 2021); expertise (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Chaovalit, 2014); attractiveness (Chekima et al., 2020; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021); brand relevance (Kamins, 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994); interaction with customers (Reinikainen et al., 2020); helpfulness (Coyle et al., 2012); and advertising value (Gangadharbatla & Daugherty, 2013). Many researchers have acknowledged the positive effects of these factors on customers' buying intentions. Chaovalit (2014) reported that on online platforms, beauty bloggers' visual appeal, along with their credibility and expertise, significantly influences consumers' intentions to purchase cosmetics. However, Balabanis & Chatzopoulou (2019) and Wiedmann & von Mettenheim (2021) demonstrated that influencers' knowledge of the beauty industry does not have a substantial effect on purchase intentions.

There have been few studies on the factors affecting purchasing behavior in the field of skin care products in Vietnam. Pham & Tran (2021) identified Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, Brand Image, Consumer Knowledge, and Product Origin as significant factors shaping consumer purchasing decisions. Le et al. (2021) investigated the impact of heuristic factors on customers' perceptions of influencers' information credibility on YouTube channels and their connections with brand attitudes, brand credibility, and purchase intentions for cosmetic products in Vietnam. Their findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between heuristic factors and the perception of information credibility.

A review of the previous literature shows that while the impact of influencer marketing on purchase intentions has been extensively investigated, much of the existing research disproportionately focuses on Generation Z, which is emerging as a key consumer group. In the context of Vietnam, the impact of influencer marketing on Generation Z purchase intentions has been investigated to a much greater degree. Moreover, there is a noticeable lack of research quantifying the impact of influence marketing within Vietnam's beauty industry. Addressing these research gaps, this paper can be distinguished from other previous studies by proposing a model to quantify how the different dimensions of influencer marketing affect the purchasing behavior of Generation Z in the beauty industry in Vietnam.

3. Methodology and Data

3.1. Theoretical model

The paper is based on several essential theories and models that are directly relevant to consumer purchasing decisions and marketing strategies. These include the theory of reasoned action (TRA), word of mouth (WOM), electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and the brand identity model.

Human behavior, including purchasing decisions, can be predicted from a person's intention to perform that behavior, which is, in turn, influenced by their attitudes and subjective norms. Derived from this relationship, Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) developed the TRA model, which encompasses two groups of variables, namely, Attitude and Subjective Norms, which are incorporated in this paper to analyze the factors affecting Generation Z's purchasing decisions of beauty products in Vietnam.

Word of mouth (WOM) is defined as face-to-face consumer-to-consumer or consumer-to-vendor communication about a product, brand, or service (Arndt, 1967). WOM has long been recognized as one of the most effective and influential communication channels, as messages can be exchanged through strong personal relationships such as family, friends, and colleagues, as well as through weaker connections, including acquaintances and strangers (Duhan, 1997; Steffes & Burgee, 2009). With the rapid development of the internet and digital technology, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has emerged as a dominant form of consumer communication, referring to the dissemination of information through online platforms and social networks (Lu & Chen, 2017; Trusov et al., 2009, Ginting et al., 2023). Unlike traditional WOM, e-WOM does not require real-time, face-to-face interactions, and its content can exist for a long time and reach more consumers. This factor helps increase information exchange in e-WOM more than in traditional WOM (López & Sicilia, 2014). In this paper, eWOM theory is applied to construct in-depth interview questions exploring how Generation Z in Vietnam receives information from influencers and their attitudes toward how influencers communicate information across online media platforms.

The Aaker Brand Identity Model was introduced by Aaker (1996) and consists of four components contributing to a brand's identity and perception: brand as a product, brand as an organization, brand as a person, and brand as a symbol. The value proposition, which is created on the basis of a brand's identity, refers to a brand's unique value to its target audience, explaining why customers should choose that brand over competitors. This proposition goes beyond just the functional benefits

of a product or service, encompassing emotional and self-expressive benefits that differentiate the brand from its competitors. It is a central element that contributes to overall brand identity and influences how the brand is perceived and chosen by customers. Given the potential impact of influencers on a brand’s image and value, this paper adopts the value proposition from the Aaker Brand Identity Model to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of influencer marketing on purchasing decisions for beauty products among Vietnamese Generation Z.

3.2. Proposed research model

After the factors affecting purchasing decisions for beauty products and the four theories and models mentioned above are reviewed, an analytical model that consists of eight independent factors and two mediating factors is proposed to assess the impact of influencer marketing on Vietnamese Generation Z’s purchasing decisions for beauty products (Figure 1).

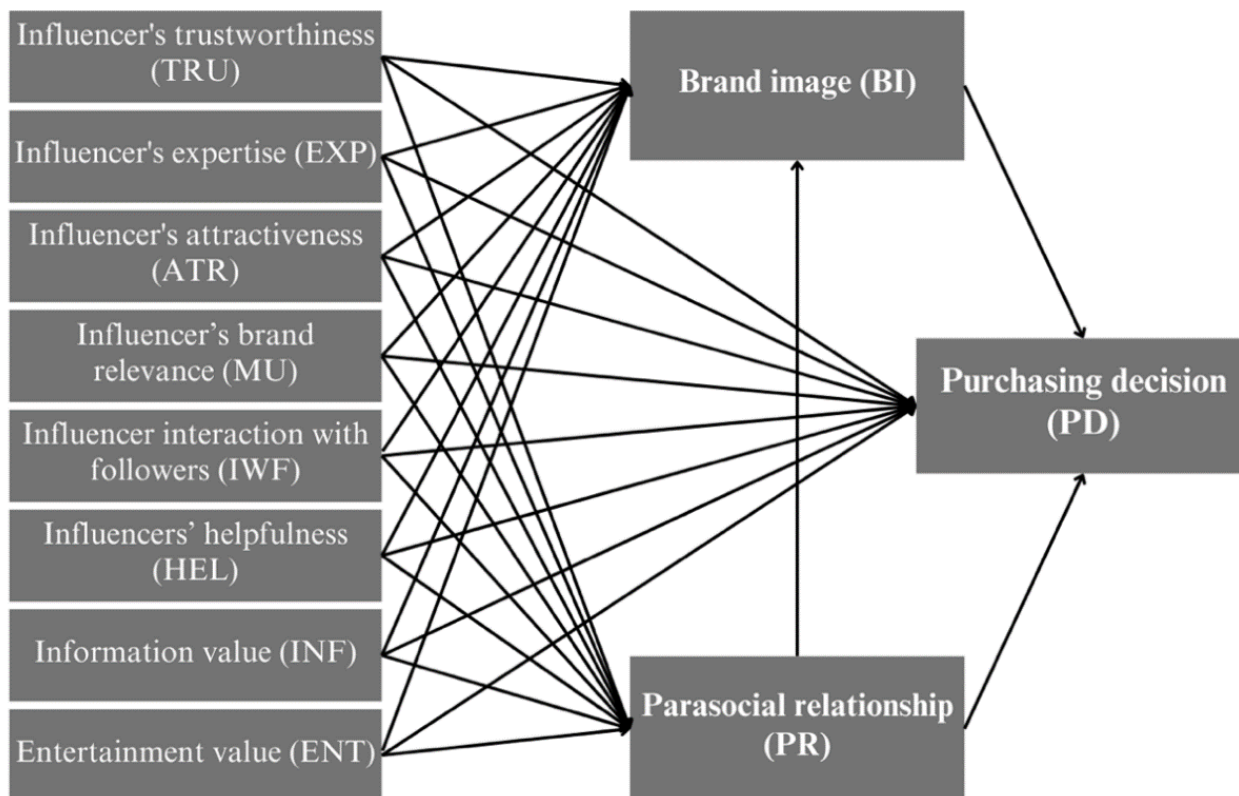


Figure 1 Proposed research model.

In this work, the dependent factor, Vietnamese Generation Z’s purchasing decisions (PDs) of beauty products, is measured with five observed variables ranging from PD1 to PD5, revealing attitudes, willingness, and the future purchase of beauty products (Table 1).

Trustworthiness can be defined as the honesty, integrity, and reliability that a person possesses (Waldt et al., 2009). According to Ohanian (1990), trustworthiness reflects the level of confidence that customers have in influencers, particularly in their ability to communicate messages that are perceived as credible and reasonable. The amount of trust placed in influencers has a positive effect on purchase decisions (Chekima et al., 2020). In this paper, the trustworthiness (TRU) of influencers is measured via four observed variables from TRU1 to TRU4, which represent the level of confidence that customers place in influencers’ credibility and reliability when making purchase decisions.

Expertise, which refers to knowledge and proficiency, is an important factor affecting the purchase intentions of customers and guiding consumers' attitudes toward a brand (McGuire, 1985; Till & Busler, 2000). Nevertheless, Balabanis & Chatzopoulou (2019) and Wiedmann & von Mettenheim (2021) highlighted that influencers' knowledge of beauty products does not influence purchase intention. This study introduces the influencers’ expertise (EXP) factor, which is aimed at quantifying influencers' adeptness in comprehending beauty products, along with their practical experience and skills in product use. EXP is measured in four attributes from EXP1 to EXP4.

Attractiveness refers to the dazzlensness of one’s appearance and gestures, attracting attention and interest from others, and the alluring aspect of one's personality. Since the late 20th century, brand representatives have been shown to have a



positive effect on purchase intentions (Caballero & Solomon, 1984; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). In this paper, four observed variables comprising the influencer attractiveness (ATR) factor refer to attractiveness in terms of appearance, personality, and style.

Table 1 Factors and observed variables affecting Vietnamese Generation Z’s purchasing decisions for beauty products.

	Factors and observed variables	Code
Dependent factor	Purchasing decision	PD
	• I bought a beauty product promoted by Influencers.	PD1
	• I will pay more attention to beauty products promoted by Influencers.	PD2
	• I will continue to repurchase products promoted by Influencers in the future.	PD3
	• I wish to keep buying products promoted by Influencers.	PD4
Independent factor	• I am willing to pay a higher price to purchase products promoted by Influencers rather than a cheaper product that has not been promoted by Influencers.	PD5
	Influencer’s trustworthiness	TRU
	• Influencers are very reliable.	TRU1
	• The advertising posts by Influencers are more trustworthy than other advertising methods.	TRU2
	• The information provided by Influencers is objective.	TRU3
	• I trust Influencers more than others.	TRU4
	Influencer’s expertise	EXP
	• Influencers have knowledge about beauty products.	EXP1
	• Influencers have experience using various beauty products.	EXP2
	• Influencers have the expertise to evaluate products.	EXP3
	• Influencers have the skills to use beauty products.	EX4P
	Influencer’s attractiveness	ATR
	• Influencers have attractive appearances.	ATR1
	• Influencers have unique personalities.	ATR2
	• Influencers have trendy styles.	ATR3
	• Influencers have their own charisma.	ATR4
	Influencer’s brand relevance	MU
	• The images of Influencers align with the brand's promotion.	MU1
	• Influencers’ images share similarities with the beauty product's imagery.	MU2
	• Promotional posts fit with the influencer's previous posts.	MU4
	Influencer’s interaction with followers	IWF
	• The posts of Influencers I follow have a lot of interactions.	IWF1
	• I find it easy to interact with Influencers on social media.	IWF2
	• Influencers care about the feedback from their followers.	IWF3
	Influencer’s helpfulness	HEL
	• Influencers provide many useful tips on using beauty products.	HEL1
	• Influencers give honest reviews about beauty products.	HEL2
	• Influencers help me understand the benefits of beauty products.	HEL3
	Information value of advertising with Influencer	INF
	• Advertising with Influencers provides valuable information about the product.	INF1
• Advertising with Influencers suggests the brand of the product I'm looking for.	INF2	
• Advertising with Influencers suggests the benefits of the product I'm looking for.	INF3	
• Influencers inform me about products available in the market	INF4	
Entertainment value of advertising with Influencer	ENT	
• Advertisements with influencers are highly entertaining.	ENT1	
• Advertisements with influencers are more interesting than other ads.	ENT2	
• Advertisements with influencers make me feel comfortable while watching.	ENT3	



Mediating factor	Brand image of the beauty product	BI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The products/brands promoted by influencers are differentiated from other products/brands. • I believe in the quality of the products/brands promoted by Influencers. • I feel that the products promoted by influencers are reasonably priced. • I think that products promoted by influencers have fewer risks (counterfeit, scams, quality...). • Products/brands promoted by Influencers evoke positive emotions. • I feel a similarity between myself, my personality, and the brand promoted by Influencers. 	BI1 BI2 BI3 BI4 BI5 BI6
	Followers' parasocial relationship with Influencer	PR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Influencer makes me feel familiar like friends. • I always look forward to new content from Influencers. • Influencers understand what I like. • If I come across a story about Influencers somewhere else (not on their channels), I will read it. • I want to meet Influencers in real life. 	PR1 PR2 PR3 PR4 PR5

The relevance of an influencer to a brand is determined by the extent of alignment between the qualities associated with the individual and the attributes of the brand itself (Kirmani & Shiv, 1998). Kamins (1990) underscored the need for celebrity images and product messages to harmonize effectively for optimal advertising. Similarly, according to Misra & Beatty (1990), Kamins & Gupta (1994), and Janssen et al. (2021), promoting a product through celebrities with images suitable for the products can enhance the credibility of both the product and celebrities, thereby increasing the intention to buy the product. Influencers' relevance to the Brand (MU) factor in the paper is broken down into four attributes from MU1 to MU4.

Interaction is the connection, contact, and information exchange between two or more people. As social media evolves, users now have multiple ways to follow their identities. Accordingly, some social network users have created parasocial relationships through their interactions with celebrities. The more interactions there are, the more fans perceive idols as trustworthy friends (Bond, 2016). Those fans are also more likely to trust influencers' product recommendations and develop a greater intention to purchase the products promoted by influencers (Reinikainen et al., 2020). In this paper, influencer interaction with followers (IWF) covers influencers' frequency and ease of interaction with followers and includes three observed variables from IWF1 to IWF3.

Being helpful involves aiding or being willing to assist others. If an influencer listens to customer inquiries or complaints and provides reasonable solutions, customers tend to continue purchasing that product (Coyle et al., 2012). In this paper, three factors that make up influencers' helpfulness (HEL) range from HEL1 to HEL3, showing the helpfulness of influencers in providing tips, reviews, and information about the benefits of beauty products.

Advertising value is defined as "The subjective assessment of the relative worth or utility of advertising to consumers" (Ducoffe, 1995) and is expressed in information value and entertainment value. The information value helps to explain to buyers the quality and characteristics of the product, thereby determining the customer's purchasing decision (Gangadharbatla & Daugherty, 2013). Entertainment value is the level of emotions brought to users when they receive advertising. Ducoffe (1995) and Shavitt et al. (1998) asserted that the perceived entertainment of an advertisement has a strong effect on the consumer's attitude toward that advertisement, thereby stimulating the customer's intention to buy the product. In this paper, the information value of advertising (INF) is measured from INF1 to INF3, while the entertainment value of advertising (ENT) is also broken down into ENT1 to ENT3.

Brand image (BI) and followers' parasocial relationships with influencers (PRs) are two mediating factors. When an influencer advertises or comments on a product, they use their influence to affect the brand of that product. The influencer's positive comments and experiences with the product influence the brand image of their followers, making them trust the brand more and leading them to make purchasing decisions. Therefore, BI plays an intermediary role in the relationship between the influencer and the purchasing decision of Generation Z. When an influencer gains the affection of their followers, their words become more persuasive, making it easier to convince their followers to make purchases. To gain affection from followers, influencers must build trust by expressing their attractive qualities and consistently creating content that provides positive value to their audience. The factor PR plays an intermediary role in the relationship between the influencer and the purchasing decision of Generation Z.

In total, 29 observed variables from 8 groups of independent factors and 11 observed variables from 2 mediating factors are selected to assess how influencer marketing affects Generation Z's purchasing decisions of beauty products in Vietnam.

3.3. Survey for quantitative analysis



Primary data were collected through a well-structured questionnaire with Generation Z in Vietnam. The survey was carried out both online and offline from October 1, 2021, to April 30, 2022, through both sharing the online questionnaire on Facebook and distributing the questionnaires among the research team members' connections. The survey participants were individuals belonging to Generation Z who were born between 1995 and 2010 in Vietnam. In total, 1500 responses were received, of which 1261 were valid.

Among the 1261 respondents, 54.32% lived in the northern region of Vietnam (Table 2). Most respondents were between 16 and 21 years old, accounting for 70.51% of the sample. The respondents whose income fell below a monthly threshold of VND 3 million accounted for 50.67% of the total. Almost all the respondents used social networks, with Facebook being the most prominent at 99.21%.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the sample.

Demographic profile	Indicator	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	1123	89.04
	Male	106	8.42
	Not specified	32	2.54
Residence	North	685	54.32
	Central	194	15.38
	South	382	30.30
Age	11-15	141	11.17
	16-21	889	70.51
	22-26	231	18.32
Monthly income (million VND)	Under 3	639	50.67
	3 - under 6	404	32.05
	6 - under 10	130	10.30
	Over 10	88	6.98
Social network use	Facebook	1250	99.12
	Instagram	1081	85.73
	TikTok	808	64.08
	YouTube	1121	88.90
	Zalo	1074	85.14

The participants were required to evaluate the degree of their perception of each observed variable on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire consists of two main parts. Part 1 includes personal information and previous experiences purchasing beauty products from influencers. Part 2 consists of measurement scales for 45 observed variables using a 5-point Likert scale.

After checking for scale reliability via Cronbach's alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) were conducted to evaluate the impacts of influencer marketing on Generation Z's purchase decision of beauty products in Vietnam. Two types of relationships are considered at this step: direct relationships and indirect relationships between variables. The direct relationships were synthesized via AMOS 24, whereas the indirect relationships were analyzed via SPSS 26. Additionally, bootstrapping, a resampling method used to estimate the sampling distribution of a statistic by drawing repeated samples from the data, was used to analyze the indirect relationships between variables.

3.4. In-depth interviews for qualitative analysis

Two techniques are utilized in this paper, including nonverbal prediction and in-depth interviews, to explore the attitudes and thoughts of Generation Z consumers toward beauty products advertised by influencers while also examining their attitudes toward these influencers themselves.

In nonverbal prediction techniques, respondents are exposed to visual stimuli such as images, magazines, and clippings, through which they express their unconscious associations with the brand. Most nonverbal techniques do not end with a visual task but are usually followed by respondents discussing their associations (Belk et al., 2013). In this study, participants were asked to perform visual tasks, including viewing different influencers' advertisements, comparing these advertisements, and seeing images of influencers. The objective of this visual task is to explore evidence of the interviewees' psychological responses, perceptions, and viewpoints regarding the influencers' and influencers' advertisements. On this basis, the results

from visual tasks provide further clarity on the influencer-related factors affecting purchasing decisions. The interviewees were asked to answer questions related to their beauty product shopping behavior, their perceptions when viewing some selected advertisements, and their viewpoints on influencers. The primary purpose of the in-depth interviews in this paper was to validate and clarify the emotions and opinions of the interviewees after they viewed predetermined advertisements with the participation of influencers.

An in-depth interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of information related to a research topic and thoroughly exploring the interviewee’s responses (Taylor et al., 2016). In this study, the interviewees were asked to answer questions related to their beauty product shopping behavior, their perceptions when viewing some selected advertisements, and their viewpoints on influencers. Ten consumers of beauty products, 4 from the northern region of Vietnam, 4 from the southern region, and 2 from the central region, participated in the in-depth interviews. These interviewees were selected on the basis of criteria proposed in Lisichkova & Othman (2017): (i) belong to Generation Z; (ii) have social media accounts and/or read online blogs; (iii) use social networks for communication; (iv) know about influencers; and (v) purchase beauty products at least once in their lifetime. All 10 interviewed individuals were female and bought beauty products regularly. The in-depth interview questionnaire includes two types of questions: 3 in-depth interview questions and 5 visual tasks to comprehend how influencers affect the ability of the Vietnamese Generation Z to buy beauty products.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Scale reliability analysis

The results of the Cronbach's alpha test show that all the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the 11 groups of factors are greater than 0.7, and the corrected item–total correlation coefficients of all 45 observed variables are greater than 0.3 (Table 3). Therefore, no group of factors or observed variables is excluded from the model, and the scales can be applied for EFA with reliability.

Table 3 Cronbach’s alpha results.

	Code	Cronbach’s Alpha	Corrected item - total correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
Dependent factor	PD	0.849		
	PD1		0.600	0.838
	PD2		0.670	0.817
	PD3		0.792	0.785
	PD4		0.770	0.792
	PD5		0.523	0.858
Independent factor	TRU	0.838		
	TRU1		0.691	0.790
	TRU2		0.691	0.786
	TRU3		0.617	0.820
	TRU4		0.695	0.784
	EXP		0.865	
	EXP1	0.747		0.814
	EXP2	0.778		0.801
	EXP3	0.610		0.870
	EX4P	0.726		0.822
	ATR	0.896		
	ATR1		0.705	0.890
	ATR2		0.774	0.863
	ATR3		0.799	0.854
	ATR4		0.799	0.855
	MU		0.880	
	MU1	0.736		0.848
	MU2	0.744		0.845
MU3	0.775	0.833		
MU4	0.708	0.859		
IWF	0.737			
IWF1		0.525	0.693	



	IWF2		0.582	0.626
	IWF3		0.579	0.629
	HEL	0.861		
	HEL1		0.737	0.804
	HEL2		0.711	0.830
	HEL3		0.763	0.780
	INF	0.879		
	INF1		0.709	0.857
	INF2		0.771	0.833
	INF3		0.791	0.825
	INF4		0.688	0.865
	ENT	0.844		
	ENT1		0.678	0.812
	ENT2		0.761	0.731
	ENT3		0.691	0.800
Mediating factor	BI	0.893		
	BI1		0.637	0.886
	BI2		0.749	0.869
	BI3		0.696	0.877
	BI4		0.736	0.871
	BI5		0.750	0.869
	BI6		0.719	0.874
	PR	0.853		
	PR1		0.673	0.822
	PR2		0.737	0.804
	PR3		0.682	0.819
	PR4		0.634	0.831
	PR5		0.619	0.839

4.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

EFA was conducted four times, and three variables, including IWF1, IWF2, and IWF3, were removed from the research measurements. As a result, after 4 rotations, 9 groups of independent factors and 37 observed variables were retained (Table 4), which explained 63.64% of the variability in the original observed variables (Table 5). KMO and Bartlett’s test coefficients were 0.873 and 0.000, respectively. CFA results also revealed that the model with selected variables was appropriate for SEM analysis in the next stage, with a chi-square of 3.372, GFI of 0.90, CFI of 0.94, TLI of 0.94, RMSEA of 0.04, and PCLOSE of 1.00.

4.3. The impact of influencer marketing on Generation Z’s purchasing decision for beauty products in Vietnam: Results from quantitative analysis

Regarding the direct relationship, with an R-squared of 0.611, the proposed model was useful because it explained 61.1% of the changes in Vietnamese Generation Z’s purchasing decision for beauty products. The results from the SEM approach show that three of the nine factors, PR (parasocial relationship with influencers), BI (brand image of beauty product), and TRU (influencers’ trustworthiness), affect purchasing decisions (PDs) (Table 6, Table 8).

Table 4 Final rotation matrix.

Variables	Factor									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ATR1	0.678									
ATR2	0.808									
ATR3	0.939									
ATR4	0.741									
TRU1	0.671									
TRU2	0.721									
TRU3	0.623									
TRU4	0.725									
PR1			0.694							
PR2			0.910							
PR3			0.654							



PR4	0.602						
PR5	0.630						
BI1		0.574					
BI2		0.635					
BI3		0.727					
BI4		0.842					
BI5		0.761					
BI6		0.622					
EXP1				0.761			
EXP2				0.866			
EXP3				0.546			
EXP4				0.654			
REL1					0.717		
REL 2					0.804		
REL 3					0.847		
REL 4					0.700		
INF1						0.511	
INF2						0.828	
INF3						0.869	
INF4						0.560	
ENT1							0.729
ENT2							0.958
ENT3							0.563
HEL1							0.602
HEL2							0.705
HEL3							0.715

Table 5 Total variance explained.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	18.311	43.597	43.597	17.957	42.756	42.756
2	2.834	6.747	50.344	2.481	5.906	48.662
3	1.764	4.201	54.545	1.408	3.352	52.014
4	1.542	3.671	58.216	1.169	2.783	54.796
5	1.249	2.973	61.190	.910	2.166	56.962
6	1.108	2.639	63.828	.759	1.807	58.770
7	1.020	2.429	66.257	.674	1.604	60.374
8	.960	2.285	68.542	.584	1.391	61.765
9	.796	1.895	70.438	.445	1.060	62.825
10	.705	1.678	72.116	.342	.813	63.638

Table 6 Regression results for the direct relationships.

Variables	Estimate	S.E.	t	Sig
TRU	0.188	0.052	3.618	0.000
EXP	0.046	0.056	0.810	0.418
ATR	-0.071	0.042	-1.714	0.087
MU	0.049	0.048	1.030	0.303
HEL	0.092	0.068	1.358	0.175
INF	0.109	0.070	1.572	0.116
ENT	-0.095	0.049	-1.920	0.055
BI	0.236	0.069	3.410	0.000
PR	0.437	0.053	8.198	0.000
R-Squared	0.611			

With respect to the indirect relationship, four factors, namely, TRU (influencers’ trustworthiness), ATR (influencers’ attractiveness), INF (information value of advertising with influencers), and ENT (entertainment value of advertising with influencers), indirectly affect purchasing decisions through two mediating factors: BI (brand image of beauty products) and PR (parasocial relationship with influencers) (Table 7, Table 8). Moreover, MUs (influencers’ relevance to brand image) influence only indirectly through BI rather than PR.



Table 7 Regression results for indirect relationships.

Relationship	Bootstrap lower-level confidence interval	Bootstrap upper-level confidence interval	Impacts	Indirect impact coefficient
TRU → BI → PD	0.2628	0.3750	Yes	0.3171
ATR → BI → PD	0.2094	0.2013	Yes	0.2506
MU → BI → PD	0.2735	0.3728	Yes	0.3217
INF → BI → PD	0.2493	0.3577	Yes	0.3037
ENT → BI → PD	0.2663	0.3673	Yes	0.3174
TRU → PR → PD	0.2182	0.3066	Yes	0.2613
ATR → PR → PD	0.2229	0.3068	Yes	0.2645
INF → PR → PD	0.2287	0.3244	Yes	0.2753
ENT → PR → PD	0.2491	0.3410	Yes	0.2957
EXP → BI → PD	0.2344	0.3330	No	-
HEL → BI → PD	0.2282	0.3188	No	-
EXP → PR → PD	0.2135	0.3039	No	-
HEL → PR → PD	0.1987	0.2857	No	-

The estimation results show that almost all the factors influence the purchasing decisions of Generation Z for beauty products, except that EXP (Influencer’s Expertise) and HEL (Influencer’s Helpfulness) do not play any role in the direct or indirect relationship with Generation Z’s purchasing decisions for beauty products in Vietnam (Table 8).

Table 8 Summary of the relationships between variables.

Groups of factors	Direct impact coefficient on PD	Indirect impact coefficient on PD through BI and PR	
		Through BI	Through PR
TRU	0.160	0.3171	0.2613
ATR	-	0.2506	0.2645
MU	-	0.3217	-
INF	-	0.3037	0.2753
ENT	-	0.3174	0.2957
BI	0.189	-	-
PR	0.388	0.2589	-

TRU is the single independent factor that both directly and indirectly influences the purchasing decisions of Vietnamese Generation Z. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Le & Hoang (2018), indicating the crucial role of trustworthiness in shaping the purchasing decisions of Generation Z in Vietnam. In the context of Vietnam, where social media is rapidly growing, Generation Z is more curious, as it is exposed to numerous advertisements from various brands. Consequently, they tend to trust social media influencers throughout their buying process and are drawn to products promoted by trusted influencers (Aggad & Ahmad, 2021; Chekima et al., 2020; Fullscreen, 2018; Suprawan, 2021; 7SAT, 2021; Phung & Qin, 2021; Nguyen & Duong, 2024). Influencers in Vietnam have gained the trust of Generation Z for several reasons. Many influencers are young individuals from Millennials or Generation Z, enabling them to communicate effectively and understand the preferences of Generation Z. Additionally, influencers may have previously shared their opinions and experiences with a variety of products beyond beauty products, which resonates with Generation Z’s own experiences. As a result, when influencers endorse beauty products, their followers are more likely to make a purchase, driven by the trust they place in these reviews. The trustworthiness of influencers not only enhances the brand image of beauty products but also fosters a strong sense of connection with their followers. These reasons collectively explain why TRU is a key direct determinant of buying decisions among the Vietnamese Generation Z.

The ATR has a positive indirect effect through the mediating variables of BI and PR. This positive impact finding aligns with previous research by Caballero & Solomon (1983), Jamil & Hassan (2014), Hermanda et al. (2019), Chekima et al. (2020), Phung & Qin (2021), Wiedmann & von Mettenheim (2021) and Nguyen & Duong (2024). Among Vietnamese Generation Z, influencers’ trendy style is the most highly prioritized factor, followed by personalities, charisma, and appearance, with a factor loading of 0.939 (ATR3). To effectively engage this audience, influencers must possess creative and attractive speaking styles and generate positive thoughts and emotions. If influencers can show their unique personalities, trendy styles, and charm through their appealing appearance, they are more likely to evoke positive emotions in Generation Z audiences and improve the brand image of beauty products, thereby attracting Generation Z to make purchases.

The MU affects the purchasing decisions of Vietnamese Generation Z through the BI variable, a finding that is consistent with research conducted by Janssen et al. (2021). Among all the variables that have an indirect relationship with purchasing decisions through BI, the MU has the strongest relationship, implying that the relevance of an influencer to a brand is the most



significant factor influencing the brand image of beauty products and subsequently affecting the purchasing decisions of Vietnamese youth. Within the MU factor group, Generation Z in Vietnam is concerned mainly with "influencers' images aligning with the target customers of the brand" (MU3), with a loading factor of 0.847. Compared with previous generations, Generation Z has many unique traits and prefers brands that strongly align with their worldview (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Therefore, choosing an influencer suitable for Generation Z is more effective than selecting an influencer who is merely proficient in their profession or aesthetically pleasing but fails to convey the necessary information that this generation requires. Additionally, Generation Z is deeply embedded in social media culture, meaning that the products they use should be "social media friendly" (Stelmaszczyk, 2022). However, despite their heavy social media engagement, they are increasingly aware of the adverse effects of social media and seek a healthier online experience. Consequently, they are drawn to products that provide a sense of peace and lightness and brands that prioritize their health, psychology, and emotions (Saunter & Shin, 2019; Stelmaszczyk, 2022). However, not all Influencers possess a deep understanding of Generation Z's psychological complexity. To effectively engage and inspire Vietnamese Generation Z and stimulate their purchase, influencers should genuinely connect with and understand this generation.

INF has an indirect effect on the decision to purchase beauty products among Vietnamese Generation Z through two intermediate variables, BI and PR. This finding is consistent with a study by Gangadharbatla & Daugherty (2013). Within this factor, Generation Z places a significant emphasis on information about the benefits of products (INF3), with a loading factor of 0.869. In addition, they care about the attributes and prices of products before they decide to buy them (Phung & Qin, 2018; Bang, 2023). Like INF, ENT exerts an indirect influence on the purchasing decision through BI and PR, indicating that Vietnamese Generation Z focuses not only on the relevance of influencers to their target customers but also on the value of information about product benefits and the entertainment value in advertising. This aligns with the behavioral characteristics of Generation Z, as they tend to gravitate toward brands that possess distinctive personalities (Stelmaszczyk, 2022). Entertainment elements in advertisements serve as creative elements that effortlessly create trends on social networks without overshadowing crucial information in the advertisement. Consequently, brands that effectively leverage entertainment elements in their advertising campaigns more easily capture the interest of Vietnamese Generation Z. Influencers who can incorporate entertainment elements into their advertising content can successfully attract Vietnamese Generation Z and generate curiosity regarding the advertised products.

Two variables, EXP (influencer expertise) and HEL (influencer convenience), do not affect the purchasing decision of Generation Z in the purchase of beauty products. This result can be attributed to the preferences of Generation Z, for whom advertising content related to beauty products that merely convey basic information is inadequate. Generation Z places high value on creative freedom, self-expression, and the exploration of new experiences. They are particularly attracted to brands with distinctive identities and unique characteristics and have a strong preference for products that are personalized to address their specific needs (Bolt; 2023). They continuously challenge traditional beauty standards because before making a purchase decision, they spend a significant amount of time researching various ingredients, multifunctional benefits and potential harms (Bang, 2023). These expectations have heightened competition within the beauty industry, making it increasingly difficult to rely solely on influencers' personal experiences and expertise to resonate with Generation Z. Providing comprehensive content is insufficient, but makeup tips and experiences must be carefully tailored to meet the preferences and expectations of Generation Z. In many cases, individuals promoting beauty products may not be influencers specializing in beauty-related content. In such instances, expertise and helpfulness are often insignificant factors in driving Generation Z's purchasing decisions. Instead, the most critical determinant in this context is the level of trust Generation Z places in the influencer (7SAT, 2021).

4.4. The impact of influencer marketing on Generation Z's purchasing decision for beauty products in Vietnam: Results from qualitative analysis

The in-depth interview results provide a thorough comprehension of the results from the SEM analysis. The interview results are similar to those from the SEM analysis, which shows that the Vietnamese Generation Z pays substantial attention to influencers' trustworthiness when purchasing beauty products. All the interviewees admitted that they regularly purchased beauty products on the basis of suggestions from influencers and beauty bloggers. Generation Z is said to be embedded in social networks, and in that environment, they have a strong tendency to seek reliable information, which enables them to be rational shoppers. Therefore, influencers' honesty and trustworthiness affect the Vietnamese Generation Z the most when they decide to buy beauty products (Quynh, 2019; Nguyen & Duong, 2024; Vu & Pham, 2024). Furthermore, from the perspective of the interviewees, honesty means that influencers must provide their true feelings and opinions about the advertised products and highlight both the strengths and the weaknesses of the product with clear evidence that they have used the products. However, it is worth noting that Generation Z always places high value on diversity and creativity; thus, in addition to being honest, influencers need to have a young and friendly communication style with Generation Z and bring positive energy to their followers.

The in-depth interview results also provide strong evidence to support SEM's analysis that the Vietnamese Generation Z cares about influencers' relevance to the targeted customers. According to respondents, to show their relevance, influencers

should regularly share their healthy lifestyle on social networks and provide guidance on how to build that lifestyle (McGuire, 1985; Phung & Qin, 2021). Moreover, influencers must have life philosophies similar to the values that Generation Z pursues.

The in-depth interview results also reveal interesting findings beyond the quantitative analysis results related to the impact of influencers with different levels of fame on Vietnamese Generation Z's decisions to buy beauty products. Advertisements with highly famous influencers might quickly become viral, increasing brands' image and credibility. However, they might not convince the Vietnamese Generation Z to buy the advertised products. Moreover, influencers with lower levels of influence are more persuasive because they are believed to have more honest product reviews, reflecting the increasing trend of micro influencers in Vietnam (Tomorrow Marketer, 2020; 7SAT, 2021). Additionally, depending on the type of beauty product, influencers with different levels of fame may have different impacts on purchasing decisions. For skincare products, less-famous influencers affect Vietnamese Generation Z more strongly than more famous influencers do. The opposite observations are noted for makeup products. This finding is consistent with research by Phung & Qin (2021). This can be explained by the fact that skincare products carry greater risk and can lead to undesirable serious consequences if they are incorrectly used or unsuitable for the skin. As a result, the Vietnamese Generation Z cares more about advertisements by influencers, who are believed to provide more honest reviews. For makeup products, the Vietnamese Generation Z is more concerned with the products' color and whether these products match their skin tones.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The SEM results revealed that influencers' trustworthiness is a critical factor that affects Vietnamese Generation Z's purchasing decisions both directly and indirectly. Moreover, influencers' attractiveness, the information value of the advertisement, and the entertainment value of the advertisement have indirect impacts on purchasing behavior through both brand image and the relationship between followers and influencers. Additionally, influencers' relevance to the brand indirectly affects purchasing decisions through brand image.

The in-depth interviews further validated the important role of influencers' trustworthiness in promoting beauty product purchases among Vietnamese Generation Z. Nevertheless, the in-depth interviews provided some insightful findings that extend beyond the results from SEM analysis, indicating that the impact of influencers' trustworthiness on Generation Z's purchasing decisions varies depending on the type of advertised products and influencers' level of fame.

On the basis of the above results, some recommendations can be made to support beauty businesses operating in Vietnam in adopting influencer marketing to attract Generation Z merchants to purchase beauty products.

The chosen brand representative should consistently engage in trustworthy advertisements and provide honest reviews. Those should be the influencers that are favored by Generation Z because of their trendy styles as well as their healthy, positive, creative, and close-to-youth life philosophy. Influencers must also match Generation Z's worldview, have similar life philosophies, and care about Generation Z's health and psychology. Influencers should also be those who can be creative in creating advertising content specifically for young people, understand the language of young people, and have a closer talking style to Generation Z. In addition, they should have a sufficient level of fame to exert a significant impact on the Generation Z community. The choice of influencer also depends on the type of product being advertised. Advertisements with influencers must provide reliable information, focusing on information about the benefits of beauty products and the need to strongly demonstrate creativity and entertainment.

Given the vital role of brand image in not only directly deciding but also bridging many factors affecting the purchasing decisions of the Vietnamese Generation Z, businesses need to pay attention to strategic brand positioning tailored to the Generation Z audience. On the basis of a thorough understanding of Generation Z's psychology, behavior, and beauty needs, companies should select the Generation Z customer group that is most suitable for their products and pay special attention to product quality. Furthermore, the quality must also be accompanied by solving the problems of Generation Z customers. Therefore, companies should also learn carefully about the problems that Generation Z is facing, such as problems with facial skin or cosmetic problems, and be open to receiving this feedback from Generation Z customers so that they can tailor their products accordingly. Finally, to position the brand toward Generation Z, the brand's core philosophy must align with Generation Z's value and aspiration. This should be creatively expressed through brand identity, including key colors, logo shapes, packaging design, advertising, or media campaigns.

Maintaining Generation Z's relationship with influencers is pivotal in constructing their loyalty to the brand, as Generation Z often tends to change their decisions quickly, and there are increasing brands for Generation Z. Companies can organize events with the participation of influencers so that they can share personal stories that help spread the values of the product or establish information channels with Generation Z customers.

There are several additional recommendations for beauty businesses regarding marketing campaigns in which influencers attract more Gen Z customers in Vietnam. First, businesses need to pay more attention to creative advertising. Second, for product review ads, businesses should let influencers comment honestly and not impose on them to comment according to the wishes of the business. Third, the selection of influencers for the media campaign must be conducted depending on the type of product being advertised. For skin care product lines, focusing more on small influencers is necessary, whereas for makeup lines, large influencers are more suitable.



This study has several limitations, which provide suggestions for further research. First, Generation Z approaches influencer-driven advertisements in different ways, depending on their frequency of social media usage, methods of accessing advertisements, and frequency of following influencers. Therefore, exploring the impact of influencer marketing on various Generation Z subgroups in future research will yield more specific and useful recommendations for businesses. Second, the study's data sample consisted of 1261 participants, with almost 90% being female and approximately 50% having a monthly income below VND 3 million. To enhance generalizability, future research should broaden the sample size, including more male participants and those with higher incomes in the Generation Z demography. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how different consumer segments respond to influencer marketing in Vietnam's beauty industry.

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Ethical Considerations

The authors declare that we have received consent from the respondents and that all the details are kept confidential as per ethical considerations.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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