Research Article

The Impact of Overclaim in Local Skincare Products on Gen Z Consumer Behavior: Forecasting Trends Among Students

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Abstract

This study discusses the impact of overclaim practices in local skincare products on Gen Z consumer behavior at Universitas Selamat Sri. Overclaim, which refers to excessive claims not fully supported by scientific evidence, has been shown to reduce consumer trust and influence purchase decisions. This research uses a descriptive-verification quantitative approach to examine the effect of overclaim on trust, brand image, and purchase decisions, while also assessing the role of trust as a mediating variable. The regression analysis results indicate that overclaim significantly negatively affects Gen Z consumer behavior. Meanwhile, trust and brand image have a significant positive impact on shaping purchase decisions. The mediation test also shows that trust significantly mediates the effect of overclaim on consumer behavior. The findings highlight the importance of information transparency and evidence-based marketing practices for the local skincare industry to build consumer trust and avoid negative responses from Gen Z.

Keywords: Overclaim; Local Skincare; Gen Z; Consumer Behavior; Trust; Brand Image; Forecasting.

INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry in Indonesia, particularly local skincare products, has experienced rapid growth in recent years. According to a Populix survey (2025), although imported products are still considered trend references by some consumers,

87% of millennial and Gen Z respondents in Indonesia continue to use local skincare products.

Gen Z, born between 1995 and 2010, is known as the digital generation, actively engaging with social media and having a significant influence on consumption trends (Pakaila et al., 2024). They tend to be critical of product ingredients, information transparency, and ethical marketing issues. However, a phenomenon known as "overclaim" has emerged in the local skincare market, where excessive claims about benefits are made without sufficient scientific evidence or regulatory support. This phenomenon can lead to negative impacts such as reduced consumer trust, doubts about product safety, and financial losses (Zhang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a business ethics analysis of promotional strategies on TikTok has also found that the use of excessive claims and misleading promotional content represents a significant ethical challenge (Sabilla & Borshalina, 2024).

Previous research has emphasized that advertisements with excessive claims about skincare products can influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (SULEMAN et al., 2025). The business ethics analysis of social media promotions, such as TikTok, also identified misleading advertising practices as a serious challenge for the beauty industry (Suhardi et al., 2024). However, research specifically linking the overclaim phenomenon with forecasting Gen Z consumer behavior trends, especially among students, remains very limited (Kuncoro & Syamsudin, 2024).

Particularly within Gen Z, consumer behavior indicates that they are increasingly cautious when receiving marketing claims. Trends like "science-driven skincare" and recommendations from dermatologists are becoming more popular, while promotional claims without scientific evidence are often met with skepticism (Rahmawanty et al., 2025).

On the other hand, there is limited research that combines forecasting aspects of Gen Z consumer behavior with overclaim in local skincare, especially within student populations at specific universities such as Universitas Selamat Sri (Handayani et al., 2025). Understanding how these trends might change in the future is crucial for helping producers, regulators, and marketers anticipate consumer needs and desires while also considering stronger marketing regulations and ethics. Universitas Selamat Sri, as one of the higher education institutions with a majority of Gen Z students, can serve as an important representation of how this generation responds to local skincare products. Understanding their changing behavior towards overclaim is essential, not only for academic purposes but also as strategic input for local skincare industry players. Therefore, it is important to study the impact of overclaim phenomena on Gen Z consumer behavior at Universitas Selamat Sri and forecast the future trends in this behavior. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of consumer behavior literature while also providing practical recommendations for the local skincare industry to adopt more ethical and transparent marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gen Z Consumer Behavior

Generation Z (born 1997–2012) is a group of consumers highly adaptable to digital technology and social media. They tend to seek product information through online reviews, influencers, and e-commerce platforms before making a purchase (Chen & Yang, 2023). The characteristics of Gen Z include being critical, prone to brand switching if expectations are not met, and more trusting of peer reviews than traditional advertising (Tarapata, 2024).

In the context of skincare, Gen Z has a high level of awareness regarding ingredient quality, product safety, and brand transparency (Rahmawati & Permana, 2025).

Overclaim in Skincare Marketing

Overclaim refers to excessive claims in product promotions that are not supported by data or scientific evidence. According to Lulu Sabilla, such claims are considered risky promotional strategies because they can reduce consumer trust (Sabilla & Borshalina, 2024). Examples of overclaims in skincare products include promises of instant results, the ability to solve all skin problems, or claims of being side-effect-free without adequate clinical testing. A study by Nabilah et al found that consumers who encounter overclaims tend to reduce their trust and loyalty toward a brand (Nabilah et al., 2025).

Purchase Decision

According to Han, the consumer purchase decision process consists of five stages: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Han, 2021). For Gen Z, this process is heavily influenced by social media content, viral trends, and influencer reviews (Erwin et al., 2023).

Unproven excessive claims can affect the alternative evaluation and post-purchase phases, leading to brand switching and consumer complaints (Rahmawati & Permana, 2025).

Relevant Consumer Behavior Theories

- Attitude Theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975): Consumer behavior is influenced by beliefs about product attributes and the evaluation of those attributes.
- Trust Theory: Trust is a key factor determining the sustainability of the relationship between consumers and brands (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).
- Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961): Consumers go through cognitive, affective, and conative stages before making a purchase.

Consumer Behavior Forecasting

Forecasting is a method for predicting future trends based on historical data and current behavior patterns (Venkateswaran & Mm, 2025). In consumer behavior research, forecasting can be conducted using the following approaches:

- Time Series Analysis (ARIMA, Exponential Smoothing): To observe behavior trends over time.
- Trend Analysis: To observe changes in preferences.
- Markov Chain Forecasting: To predict potential shifts in consumer behavior (e.g., from loyalty to brand switching).

The use of forecasting in this study is crucial to project the future behavior of Gen Z students at Universitas Selamat Sri related to the overclaim phenomenon in local skincare products.

Previous Research
Relevant studies include:
- Kurniawati (2021): Found that overclaim negatively affects consumer trust.
- Azizah (2022): Demonstrated that Gen Z is more likely to switch brands when product claims are unproven.
- Rahmawati & Dewi (2023): Showed that brand image and trust play a mediating role between product claims and purchase decisions.

However, previous studies have not extensively explored the overclaim phenomenon in local skincare within the context of Gen Z students, with a forecasting approach.

Research Gap and Conceptual Framework
From the previous research, there is a gap in the study:
- Research on overclaim in skincare among Gen Z consumers remains limited, especially among students.
- No study has combined consumer behavior analysis with forecasting trends.
- Universitas Selamat Sri has not been specifically researched in the context of skincare consumer behavior.

This study is expected to address these gaps with the following conceptual model:
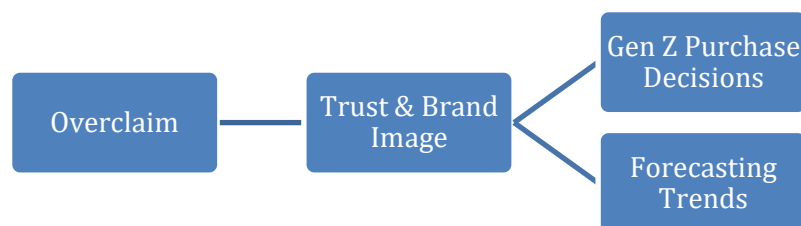
METHODS
This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive-verification research design. The quantitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on measuring variables that can be statistically processed to test the relationships between the specified variables (Sevenia & Nggili, 2023). The descriptive type is used to describe the overclaim phenomenon in local skincare products among Gen Z

students, while the verification type is used to examine the effect of overclaim on trust, brand image, and purchase decisions. Additionally, this study also involves forecasting analysis to predict future trends in Gen Z consumer behavior at Universitas Selamat Sri.

The population in this study consists of all students at Universitas Selamat Sri who belong to Generation Z (born between 1997–2012). The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which selects respondents who meet certain criteria, namely active students who have used local skincare products at least within the last three months. The sample size is determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. Assuming a population of 3,000 students, the minimum sample size is 353 respondents, so the study will aim for a minimum of 350 respondents.

The research variables consist of independent, mediating, and dependent variables (Safitri et al., 2025). The independent variable is the overclaim of local skincare products, the mediating variables include trust (consumer trust) and brand image, while the dependent variable is consumer behavior or purchase decisions (Ramadhani & Putri, 2024). The operational definitions of each variable are based on measurable indicators, for example, overclaim is measured using indicators of excessive claims, promises of instant results, and consistency with actual outcomes; trust is measured through reliability, integrity, and transparency indicators; brand image is measured through brand association, reputation, and appeal; and purchase decisions are measured through purchase intention, loyalty, and potential brand switching. All indicators are measured using a Likert scale of 1–5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Data collection will be carried out through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, as well as direct distribution to students. In addition, the researcher will use literature studies from journals, books, and cosmetic industry reports, as well as secondary data documentation from BPOM, the Indonesian Cosmetic Association, and market research related to local skincare (Ramadhani & Putri, 2024).

The data analysis technique will be conducted in several stages. First, the research instrument test will include validity testing using Pearson's correlation and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum value of 0.7. Second, descriptive analysis will be conducted to describe the characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of answers. Third, inferential analysis will be conducted to test the hypotheses, including normality tests, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and multiple regression or Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to examine the influence between variables. Furthermore, for forecasting analysis, time series forecasting methods such as ARIMA or Exponential Smoothing will be used for longitudinal data, while for cross-sectional data, Markov Chain Forecasting will be employed to project possible shifts in consumer behavior, particularly in brand switching tendencies (Rokan, 2025). The results of the forecasting analysis will be visualized in trend graphs to provide a clearer view of the future changes in Gen Z consumer behavior.

This study will be conducted at Universitas Selamat Sri, with Gen Z students as the subjects, who are consumers of local skincare products. The research is

expected to take three months, covering the stages of data collection, processing, analysis, and report writing (Rahmawati & Permana, 2025).

Research Hypotheses

Based on the background, literature review, and conceptual framework presented, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

First, it is assumed that overclaim in local skincare products has a negative impact on consumer trust among Gen Z. This is in line with findings by Lulu Sabilla, which suggest that excessive claims can reduce consumer trust in a product (Sabilla & Borshalina, 2024). Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: Overclaim in local skincare products negatively affects consumer trust among Gen Z.

Second, the decrease in trust resulting from overclaims is expected to affect brand image. Consumers who feel deceived or do not receive the results as promised tend to evaluate the brand with a negative image (Tan et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Consumer trust positively affects the brand image of local skincare products.

Third, brand image is believed to have a significant impact on purchase decisions. The better the brand image in the eyes of consumers, the higher the tendency to repurchase and avoid brand switching (Rahmawati & Permana, 2025). Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

H3: Brand image positively affects Gen Z's purchase decisions.

Additionally, this study also tests the direct relationship between independent and dependent variables. Although trust and brand image serve as mediating variables, overclaim is also expected to have a direct impact on purchase behavior. Therefore, the additional hypothesis is:

H4: Overclaim in local skincare products negatively affects Gen Z's purchase decisions.

Thus, the relationships between variables in this study can be illustrated through a conceptual model involving overclaim as the independent variable, trust and brand image as mediating variables, and purchase decisions as the dependent variable, which will then be analyzed using regression approaches and SEM-PLS, along with forecasting analysis to project future trends in consumer behavior.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION
Instrument Validity Test

The validity test was conducted using Pearson's Product Moment with the following criteria:
- Significance < 0.05
- Calculated r > Table r (n = 100, table r = 0.197)

Table 1. Validity Test Results for Overclaim, Trust, and Gen Z Behavior Indicators

Variable	Indicator	r-value	Sig.	Description
Overclaim (X)	X_1	0.642	0.000	Valid
	X_2	0.688	0.000	Valid
	X_3	0.701	0.000	Valid
	X_4	0.655	0.000	Valid
Trust (Z)	Z_1-Z_4	0.612–0.732	0.000	Valid
Gen Z Behavior (Y)	Y_1-Y_4	0.589–0.744	0.000	Valid

Reliability Test

The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha with a threshold of > 0.70.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Overclaim (X)	0.835	Reliable
Trust (Z)	0.801	Reliable
Consumer Behavior (Y)	0.878	Reliable

Normality Test

The normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method.

Table 3. Normality Test Results

Variable	Sig.	Conclusion
Unstandardized Residual	0.200	Data is normally distributed

Multicollinearity Test

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Description
Overclaim (X)	0.812	1.232	No multicollinearity
Trust (Z)	0.835	1.198	No multicollinearity

Multicollinearity Test

Equation Model

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 Z + e$$

Table 5. Regression Results

Variable	B	t-value	Sig.	Description
Constant	1.124	—	—	—
Overclaim (X)	-0.281	-3.445	0.001	Significant negative effect
Trust (Z)	0.492	6.238	0.000	Significant positive effect
R^2 = 0.512	F = 62.374	Sig = 0.000	Model fit	

Regression Results Interpretation
- Overclaim negatively affects Gen Z's consumer behavior.

This means that the higher the overclaim, the lower the purchase intention and trust among Gen Z.

- Trust positively affects Gen Z's behavior.
  The stronger the trust in local skincare, the higher the likelihood of purchasing, using, and recommending the product.
- $R^2 = 0.512$
 → 51.2% of the change in Gen Z behavior is explained by overclaim and trust.

Mediation Test (Sobel Test)

The Sobel test is used to determine if trust (Z) mediates the relationship between overclaim (X) and behavior (Y).

Sobel test results:

$$Z = 2.98 > 1.96, p = 0.003$$

Conclusion: Trust significantly mediates the effect of overclaim on Gen Z behavior.

Overclaim ⟩ Lowers Trust ⟩ Reduces Purchase Behavior
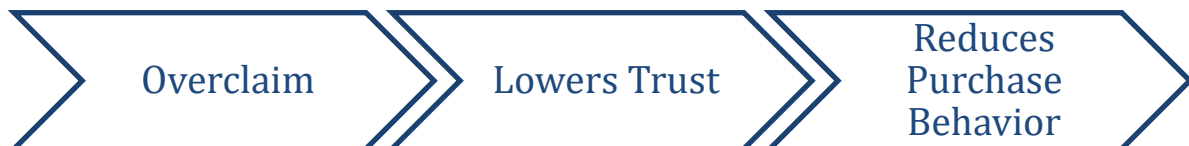
Discussion

The research findings indicate that the practice of overclaim in local skincare products has a significant negative impact on Gen Z consumer behavior. These findings suggest that the higher the intensity of excessive claims encountered by consumers, the lower their tendency to make a purchase or recommend the product. This is consistent with the characteristics of Gen Z, who are known to be critical, digital-savvy, and highly selective in responding to marketing information. Gen Z tends to verify information independently through user reviews, educational content, and authentic testimonials before making a purchase decision. Therefore, claims that are deemed unrealistic or unsupported by empirical evidence easily diminish their trust in a brand.

Furthermore, the regression results show that the consumer trust variable has a significant positive effect on Gen Z's consumption behavior. These findings reinforce the view that trust is a central factor in the consumer decision-making process, especially in the highly competitive local skincare industry with a high level of risk sensitivity. Skincare products, being products used directly on the body, demand transparency, safety, and credible information. When consumers feel that a brand is honest and consistent in conveying its product claims, behaviors such as purchase intention, loyalty, and repurchase are likely to increase.

The mediation test using the Sobel test shows that consumer trust acts as a significant mediator between overclaim and Gen Z behavior. This finding provides an important theoretical bridge in understanding how the influence mechanism of overclaim works. Overclaim does not directly reduce consumption behavior, but first reduces the level of trust; it is this reduction in trust that subsequently lowers

purchase behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that trust plays a strategic role in explaining the dynamics between marketing strategies and consumer behavior. This mechanism supports previous theories which state that perceptions of unreliable information disrupt the psychological relationship between consumers and a brand, affecting their behavioral actions.

The results of this study are consistent with several previous studies that suggest the overclaim phenomenon in digital marketing often leads to distrust and skepticism among younger consumers. Research by Sabilla and Borshalina, for example, found that excessive claims on skincare products significantly decreased brand honesty perceptions (Sabilla & Borshalina, 2024). Similarly, research by Hassoun et al showed that Gen Z is highly sensitive to manipulative information and relies more on direct evidence, such as independent reviews, than on sales narratives (Hassoun et al., 2023). The consistency between the findings of this study and previous studies strengthens the validity of the findings and highlights that overclaim is a strategic issue that local skincare industry players need to address.

Practical Implications

Practically, this research implies that local skincare marketing strategies should focus more on evidence-based marketing rather than hyperbolic narratives. Improving consumer literacy about active ingredients, formulation methods, and clinical test results will be more effective in building long-term brand credibility than using "instant" or "risk-free" claims. The use of influencers should also be directed towards authentic content, not just excessive promotions. The local skincare industry will gain greater benefits by fostering sustainable trust rather than pursuing short-term sales increases through overclaim strategies. Thus, the findings of this study provide valuable contributions to the development of ethical, effective marketing strategies that align with Gen Z's preferences.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the practice of overclaim in local skincare products has a significant negative impact on Gen Z consumer behavior. Overclaim has been shown to reduce consumer trust, which in turn lowers purchase intention, loyalty, and other purchasing behaviors. Consumer trust also proved to be a strong mediating variable in this relationship, where the higher the perception of claim manipulation, the lower the trust formed. This indicates that trust is a central factor in the decision-making process for skincare products among Gen Z. The research model can explain more than half of the variance in consumer behavior, providing empirical evidence that communication strategies and the quality of information play a critical role in shaping Gen Z's behavioral response to local skincare products. Overall, the findings emphasize that the success of marketing in the Gen Z segment is not determined by how strongly claims are made, but rather by how credibility and transparency of information are maintained.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be provided for industry players, future researchers, and academics. First, local skincare companies are advised to avoid using excessive claims and instead switch to evidence-based marketing strategies that prioritize transparency, honesty, and consumer education. Gen Z consumers are more responsive to accurate and verifiable information, so companies need to ensure that every product claim is supported by relevant scientific data or clinical tests. Second, promotional content involving influencers should be focused on delivering authentic, objective, and non-exaggerated information, given that influencers play a significant role in shaping Gen Z's perceptions and decisions. Third, regulators such as BPOM (Indonesian National Food and Drug Authority) and advertising oversight agencies need to strengthen the mechanisms for monitoring digital content to curb the growing practice of overclaim on e-commerce platforms and social media.

For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the sample scope, such as by comparing behavior across generational groups or regions, and adding psychological variables like digital literacy, trust in influencers, or product risk perceptions. Research using a mixed-methods approach may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's motives and emotional responses to overclaim practices. Additionally, experimental research can be used to test how changes in claim intensity directly affect consumer perceptions. Therefore, future studies are expected to enrich the literature on youth consumer behavior and contribute significantly to the development of ethical and sustainable marketing practices.

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