

Research Article

Micro Influencer Strategy in Building Public Trust in the Emina Brand

Adelia Rahmadani^{1*}, Zuhriah²

¹ State Islamic University of North Sumatra; e-mail : adeliaahmadani052004@gmail.com

² State Islamic University of North Sumatra; e-mail : zuhriah@uinsu.ac.id

* Corresponding Author : adeliaahmadani052004@gmail.com

Abstract: The rapid growth of digital communication and social media has transformed marketing communication strategies, encouraging companies to utilize micro influencers to establish stronger relationships with consumers. Unlike conventional promotional approaches, micro influencers are considered more credible, authentic, and capable of fostering public trust through interactive communication. This study aims to analyze the communication strategies employed by micro influencers in building public trust toward the Emina cosmetic brand on social media. The research adopted a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with two micro influencers and their followers, supported by social media content observation and documentation. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that public trust is developed through five key communication strategies: influencer credibility, message authenticity, two-way communication and audience engagement, congruence between the influencer and the Emina brand, and consistency in delivering content. These elements collectively create emotional connections, enhance message credibility, and encourage positive audience perceptions of the brand. The study also demonstrates that followers place greater trust in product recommendations based on genuine personal experiences rather than purely promotional content. This research contributes to the development of digital marketing communication studies by providing a comprehensive qualitative understanding of how micro influencers shape public trust and offers practical insights for brands targeting Generation Z consumers through social media.

Keywords: Communication Strategy; Emina; Micro Influencers; Public Trust; Social Media.

1. Introduction

The development of information technology and social media has changed the way companies communicate with consumers (Pamungkas et al., 2024). Marketing communications, previously dominated by conventional media, have now shifted to digital media, which allows for two-way interaction between companies and consumers (Rahmandani et al., 2025). Through social media, consumers not only become recipients of information, but also play an active role in providing responses, sharing experiences, and influencing other consumers' purchasing decisions (Santara & Arviani, 2023). These changes are encouraging companies to implement digital marketing strategies that are more communicative, personalized, and capable of building long-term relationships with their consumers. This development has made social media a key tool in building brand image and increasing consumer trust in a product.

The increasing use of influencer marketing shows that people are starting to trust recommendations from individuals more than promotions directly from companies. As this trend develops, the use of micro-influencers is gaining popularity because they have a smaller following but are able to build closer relationships with their audiences. This closeness creates more authentic communication, making product recommendations more honest and credible. Research (Sriwardiningsih et al., 2025) proves that the authenticity of micro

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influencers, demonstrated through openness, consistency, and emotional closeness, has a positive effect on consumer trust. In addition, the research (Indrayani et al., 2026) also found that micro influencers are more effective than Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) in building brand trust in Generation Z consumers through the suitability between the influencer's character and the brand being promoted.

One company utilizing this strategy is Emina, a local cosmetics brand under PT Paragon Technology and Innovation that targets teenagers and Generation Z. Emina actively utilizes various social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok and collaborates with micro-influencers whose characters align with the brand's identity. This strategy is implemented because young consumers tend to trust the real experiences shared by influencers more than advertisements delivered directly by companies. In the highly competitive cosmetics industry, consumer trust is a key asset for companies to maintain loyalty and increase purchasing decisions. Therefore, the communication strategy implemented by micro-influencers is a crucial aspect that deserves further study.

The urgency of this research is based on the increasingly fierce competition in the local cosmetics industry, which requires companies to not only attract consumers but also build public trust through credible communication (Windarsari, 2025). Research shows that micro-influencer credibility and brand trust are important factors influencing the intention to purchase local products, especially among Generation Z and millennials. (Saharuddin et al., 2026) also explained that the credibility of micro-influencer content can increase consumer trust and digital engagement, making influencer communication strategies a crucial element in determining the success of digital marketing. Therefore, understanding how micro-influencers build public trust is crucial for companies in designing more effective marketing communication strategies.

Although numerous studies on influencer marketing have been conducted in Indonesia, most of them still use a quantitative approach, focusing on the influence of influencers on brand trust, purchase intention, or brand loyalty. These studies emphasize the relationships between statistical variables, while the communication process carried out by micro influencers in building public trust has not been studied in depth using a qualitative approach. Furthermore, research specifically examining the communication strategies of micro influencers in the local cosmetics brand Emina is still very limited. This condition indicates a research gap that needs to be filled through this study. This study aims to analyze the communication strategies implemented by micro influencers in building public trust in the Emina brand on social media. This is expected to contribute to the development of digital marketing communication science and marketing practices in the cosmetics industry in Indonesia.

From an Islamic perspective, marketing communication activities must be based on the values of honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility. Allah SWT says in QS. Al-Ahzab verse 70: "O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak truthfully." This verse emphasizes that all forms of communication, including promotions carried out by micro influencers on social media, must be delivered honestly, objectively, and not misleading in order to build public trust in an ethical and sustainable manner. This study aims to analyze the strategies of micro influencers in building public trust in the Emina brand, emphasizing the aspects of credibility, authenticity, and interaction between influencers and audiences.

2. Method

The research used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. This method aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the communication strategies implemented by micro influencers in building public trust in the Emina brand. According to Kurniawan and Sastika (2024), qualitative descriptive methods are widely used in influencer marketing strategy research because they are able to explain the communication process, strategy implementation, and audience responses in detail. The research was conducted on micro influencers and the audience of Emina brand users who are active on social media platforms, especially Instagram. The research location includes digital interactions that occur on these platforms, as well as interviews conducted virtually. This location was chosen due to the high growth of social media users and the high involvement of micro influencers in beauty brand

marketing strategies in urban areas of Indonesia, making it relevant to the phenomenon studied.

The subjects of this study consisted of two main informants (Micro Influencers) who had collaborated with the Emina Brand, namely @zahravidza with 12 thousand followers, then referred to as informant 1 and @rikaanggrainislian with 21.4 thousand followers, then referred to as informant 2. Their selection aims to explore how they design communication messages, build narratives, and strengthen elements of trust through their content to followers, and additional informants (Followers) from micro influencers who are samples of Emina's main audience. These micro influencer followers were chosen as a representation of the public who are the target of communication. These participants were selected to gain an understanding of how micro influencer communication strategies can influence their perceptions and sense of trust in the Emina brand.

Data collection techniques are carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted using structured or semi-structured question-and-answer methods between the researcher and the informant, either in person or virtually. This technique aimed to obtain rich information regarding the informant's views, experiences, and perceptions regarding micro-influencer communication strategies in building public trust in the Emina brand. Observations were made of content created by micro-influencers on the social media platform Instagram, including how they convey messages, interact with their audiences, and audience responses in the form of likes, comments, and shares. Documentation was used to collect data through influencer uploads, social media interactions, and promotional materials related to micro-influencer communication strategies and brand campaigns.

Data analysis was conducted in a qualitative descriptive manner, which is a continuous process consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification (Miles and Huberman (2014). Data reduction was carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from the field. Data presentation was carried out by compiling the reduced data into descriptive narrative forms, thematic matrices, and content analysis tables. Furthermore, drawing conclusions and verification was carried out by interpreting the meaning of the data and drawing conclusions based on the patterns, themes, and relationships between categories found.

3. Results and Discussion

Micro Influencer Credibility as a Foundation of Trust

The research results show that micro-influencer credibility is a key factor in building audience trust in the Emina brand. This credibility is reflected in two main dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. The informants in this study possessed sufficient knowledge of beauty products, particularly Emina, and were able to explain the benefits, advantages, and how to use the products in detail.

"To develop a content concept, I usually first research the product's purpose, its ingredients, and what skin types it's suitable for, and what skin concerns it addresses. I usually create a concept that's divided into several sections, such as an opening, product introduction, how to use, and then showing the ingredients and solutions. One content usually has three categories: the first is education for the audience, the second is a product review, and the third is promotion or directing the audience to purchase." (Informant 1, 2026)

Direct product use experiences also strengthen audience perceptions of influencers' honesty. Audiences stated that they trust content based on personal experiences more than content that is purely promotional. This demonstrates that credibility is built not only through competence but also through the authenticity of the experiences shared. Research findings indicate that micro influencer credibility is a key factor in building public trust in the Emina brand. This credibility is reflected in influencers' ability to convey information clearly, provide education about product ingredients, and share real-life product use experiences. Audiences perceive that the firsthand experiences shared by influencers make the information more objective, thus increasing trust in the product.

This finding is also supported by research (Carissa & Rodhiah, 2025) which found that influencer credibility has a positive effect on brand trust, so the more credible an influencer is, the higher consumer trust in the brand being promoted. Furthermore, the study (Aji & Setyaning, 2025) also shows that influencer credibility significantly increases brand trust, which then has an impact on increasing consumer purchase intentions for local skincare products.

Authenticity as a Communication Strategy

Authenticity of messages is a crucial element in a micro-influencer's communication strategy. Observations show that micro-influencers tend to use a relaxed, personal, and less formal communication style. They convey messages in everyday language that is easily understood by their audience, particularly the younger generation, the primary target audience for the Emina brand. The resulting content generally consists of honest reviews, simple makeup tutorials, and daily content that illustrates product use in everyday life. This approach makes the message feel more natural and less like a forced advertisement. Audiences also feel more emotionally connected to the influencer, increasing trust in the message.

"As for the style of delivering product reviews, we do need to upgrade as time goes on. I usually speak in a relaxed manner, but my detailed explanations are on point." (Informant 2, 2026)

Authenticity of message was one of the most prominent communication strategies in this study. The use of casual language, personal experiences, and unambiguous reviews made the content feel more natural, preventing audiences from perceiving it as mere advertising. This approach fostered a stronger emotional connection between influencers and their followers. These findings align with research (Sriwardiningsih et al., 2025) which explains that micro-influencer authenticity, demonstrated through openness, consistency, and emotional closeness, has a positive influence on consumer trust. Audiences tend to trust influencers who demonstrate real experiences rather than simply convey promotional messages. Therefore, authenticity is a key asset in building effective digital marketing communications because it creates the perception that the recommendations provided are honest and trustworthy.

Two-Way Interaction and Communication

The research results show that active interaction between micro-influencers and their audiences is a crucial factor in strengthening trust. Micro-influencers not only act as message conveyors but also as communicators who build two-way relationships with their audiences. Informant 1 revealed that the messaging they delivered was considered quite effective in building audience engagement. This success was evident in the high level of audience interest in the content presented, which reached around 70–80%. Engagement levels were a key measure, indicated by the numerous questions audiences asked, particularly on Instagram, regarding the suitability of the product for their skin conditions. Meanwhile, informant 2 revealed that the messaging they delivered contributed to building audience trust, as indicated by increased interaction and direct communication from audiences. A strong engagement level was a key indicator of this success.

From a communication perspective, this indicates a shift from one-way communication to two-way, participatory communication. This interaction not only increases engagement but also strengthens the legitimacy of the message. Audiences tend to trust influencers who actively interact more than those who only deliver one-way content. The research results show that active interaction between micro-influencers and their audiences is a key indicator of successful communication. The high number of comments, product questions, and communication via direct messages indicates participatory communication. This demonstrates that micro-influencers not only convey information but also build interpersonal relationships with their audiences.

This finding is reinforced by research (Saharuddin et al., 2026) which states that digital engagement is a crucial variable in strengthening the influence of micro-influencers' credibility on consumer trust. The higher the level of interaction an influencer builds with their followers, the greater the audience's trust in the information they convey. Therefore, engagement is not only a measure of content popularity but also an indicator of the quality of the relationship between an influencer and their followers.

Match between Influencer and Brand

The alignment between the micro influencer's personality and Emina's brand identity is also a crucial factor in the success of the communication strategy. Emina is known as a brand that promotes the concept of "fun, youthful, and approachable," making the selection of influencers with similar personalities highly relevant. The micro influencers involved in this study have cheerful, down-to-earth personalities that resonate with the everyday lives of teenagers. This alignment makes the message feel more natural and less forced. Audiences are also more receptive to the message because they feel the influencer represents the brand.

This study found that the alignment of micro influencers' personalities with Emina's brand identity strengthens the effectiveness of marketing communications. The influencers' simple, cheerful, and relatable personalities align with Emina's image as a cosmetics brand for the younger generation. This alignment makes promotions feel more natural, making the message more receptive to the audience. These findings are supported by research (Indrayani et al., 2026) which shows that influencer-brand fit has a positive influence on the formation of brand trust, even micro influencers are considered more effective than Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) in building trust among Generation Z consumers. These findings indicate that the success of influencer marketing is not only determined by the number of followers, but also by the suitability of the influencer's character with the identity of the brand being promoted.

Consistency of Communication and Building Long-Term Trust

Consistency in messaging is also a crucial factor in building long-term trust. Micro influencers who consistently post content related to Emina products demonstrate their use and endorsement of the product. This consistency in communication is evident through their ongoing content, whether in the form of tutorials, product reviews, or product use in daily activities. This consistency creates the perception that the influencer genuinely uses Emina products, thus increasing audience confidence in their recommendations.

Audiences tend to trust influencers who demonstrate repeated product use more than those who only promote the product once. This consistency creates the perception that the influencer is committed to the brand, thereby increasing audience trust. This research also shows consistency in maintaining a consistent communication style, including tone, visuals, and messaging. This helps build a strong, easily recognizable communication identity for the audience. These findings align with research (Surjono, 2025) which states that long-term relationships between influencers and their followers are built through consistent communication, thereby increasing consumer trust and brand loyalty. Consistent messaging also strengthens the influencer's communication identity, making it easier for audiences to recognize the character and values espoused by the influencer and the brand being promoted.

Audience Perception of Brand Trust

From an audience perspective, research results show that trust in the Emina brand is influenced not only by product quality but also by how the product is communicated by micro-influencers. Audiences stated that they felt more confident in trying a product after seeing reviews and recommendations from influencers they trusted. This trust is formed through a combination of influencer credibility, message authenticity, intense interaction, and a fit between the influencer and the brand. Based on this research, micro-influencers act as mediators, connecting brands with consumers in a more personal and emotional way.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the communication strategy of micro influencers in building public trust in the Emina brand is a complex and multidimensional process. Trust is not built through a single factor, but through a combination of various interrelated communication elements. Based on the digital era characterized by an abundance of information and increasing skepticism towards advertising, micro influencers are an effective alternative communication strategy. According to Dave Chaffey and Fiona Ellis-Chadwick (2022), communication through influencers who are perceived as authentic and relevant can increase engagement, message credibility, and consumer trust in a brand. This finding strengthens the results of the previous study. (Carissa & Rodhiah, 2025) which explains that brand trust acts as a mediating factor that connects influencer credibility with consumer decisions. In addition, research (Sriwardiningsih et al., 2025) also demonstrated that consumer trust is formed through a combination of credibility and authenticity of micro-influencers in conveying messages on social media. Thus, this study confirms that micro-

influencers act as communication mediators capable of building emotional connections between brands and consumers, not simply as a means of product promotion.

4. Conclusions

This study shows that the communication strategy implemented by micro influencers plays a crucial role in building public trust in the Emina brand. This trust is formed through a combination of source credibility, content authenticity, and intense and personal interactions with the audience. Micro influencers are able to convey messages in a more relaxed, honest, and relevant manner to everyday life, thus creating an emotional closeness that strengthens positive perceptions of the brand. Furthermore, consistency in message delivery and the alignment between the influencer's image and the brand's character also increase communication effectiveness. Micro influencer-based communication strategies have proven to be more effective in building trust than mass promotional approaches, as they are able to create more personal and authentic relationships with the audience. Future research is recommended to expand the research object by involving various brands and product categories so that the results obtained can be generalized more widely. Future research can also use a quantitative approach or mixed methods to measure the relationship between variables in more depth and obtain more comprehensive results.

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