



Anti-Influencer and Peer-to-Peer Marketing: The Shift in Consumer Trust in 2026

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of anti-influencer and peer-to-peer marketing on purchase intention, with consumer trust as a mediating variable. The phenomenon of increasing consumer skepticism toward influencers, along with the growing reliance on peer-to-peer recommendations, serves as a critical foundation for understanding the shift in trust within digital marketing. This research employs a quantitative approach using a survey method. The population consists of students from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Pancasila University, with a sample of 144 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected a questionnaire using a Likert scale, and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). The results indicate that anti-influencer has a negative effect on consumer trust and purchase intention, while peer-to-peer marketing has a positive effect on both consumer trust and purchase intention. Furthermore, consumer trust is proven to have a positive effect on purchase intention and acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between peer-to-peer marketing and purchase intention. These findings suggest a shift in consumer trust from influencers toward peer recommendations, which are perceived as more authentic and trustworthy. This study implies that digital marketing strategies should emphasize transparency, authenticity, and the utilization of peer-to-peer communication to enhance trust and marketing effectiveness.

Introduction

The development of digital technology and social media has fundamentally transformed how companies build relationships with their consumers. Over the past two decades, digital marketing strategies have evolved rapidly by positioning consumers at the center of interaction, rather than merely as passive recipients of one-way marketing messages. One of the most dominant forms of this transformation is influencer marketing, which involves the use of public figures or influential individuals on social media to deliver persuasive brand messages to their audiences (Dema et al., 2025). Numerous studies indicate that influencers are capable of building brand awareness, increasing engagement, and strengthening consumer trust through perceived credibility, attractiveness, and social closeness with their followers (Freberg et al., 2011; AlFarraj et al., 2021; Amrita, 2025; Xu, 2023; Wang & Weng, 2024).

However, as influencer commercialization and paid endorsement practices continue to expand, a growing sense of fatigue and skepticism has emerged among consumers toward influencer-based marketing messages. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware that much of influencer content is transactional in nature, lacks authenticity, and tends to prioritize brand interests over audience needs (Kapitan et al., 2022; Amrita, 2025). This condition has led to a decline in the effectiveness of influencer marketing and an erosion of trust in digital figures

who were previously regarded as objective sources of recommendations (Audrezet et al., 2026; Ki et al., 2023; Hugh Wilkie et al., 2022).

This phenomenon has given rise to a new trend known as anti-influencer or de-influencing, which refers to communication practices on social media that explicitly reject, critique, or even warn audiences against purchasing products excessively promoted by influencers (Sheng & Yesiloglu, 2025). Recent studies show that de-influencing is growing rapidly, particularly among Generation Z, who possess high levels of digital literacy and tend to be more critical of disguised commercial messages (Michaelidou et al., 2026). This trend signals a paradigm shift in marketing from persuasion-based approaches toward skepticism-driven consumer behavior.

In this context, consumer trust has become a central issue undergoing redefinition. Trust is no longer built solely on the popularity or follower count of influencers, but rather on perceptions of honesty, transparency, and shared experiences between message senders and receivers. Marketing literature emphasizes that trust is a fundamental basis of consumer decision-making, especially in digital environments characterized by information overload and asymmetry risks (Azzahra et al., 2025; Zhong et al., 2025; Kusi et al., 2022; Al-Fattal, 2026). As trust in influencers declines, consumers increasingly seek alternative sources of information that are perceived as more neutral and reliable.

One such alternative that is gaining prominence is peer-to-peer (P2P) marketing, a form of marketing based on direct recommendations among consumers, whether through online reviews, digital communities, discussion forums, or interpersonal communication on social media (Chan et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2024; An et al., 2022; Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025). Unlike influencer marketing, P2P marketing relies on the social equivalence between message senders and receivers, making recommendations appear more authentic and less driven by commercial interests (Belk, 2014; Yıldız, 2025; Anselmo et al., 2026). Research indicates that peer reviews and recommendations significantly influence trust and purchase intention, often surpassing the impact of advertising and celebrity endorsements (Lisnawati & Setyawan, 2024).

The evolution of digital platforms has further strengthened the role of P2P marketing through features such as user-generated content, rating systems, and social sharing, enabling consumers to act as both producers and distributors of marketing information. In this context, consumers are no longer merely targets of marketing efforts but also strategic actors who shape brand image through their own experiences and opinions (Maswita & Fadli, 2025; Bansal & Sisodia, 2026; Alvarado-Karste & Conde, 2026). This transformation reflects a shift in power from brands and influencers toward consumer communities.

Although the literature on influencer marketing and P2P marketing has grown significantly, most studies still examine these concepts separately. Research on anti-influencer as a form of consumer resistance remains relatively limited, particularly in relation to the dynamics of trust and shifting preferences in marketing communication. Moreover, there is still a lack of studies exploring how P2P marketing functions as a substitute for trust when influencers lose their credibility in the eyes of consumers. Entering 2026, this issue has become increasingly relevant alongside rising consumer ethical awareness, demands for transparency, and a growing tendency to rely on real experiences rather than symbolic promotional messages. Therefore, research on anti-influencer and peer-to-peer marketing as representations of shifting consumer trust is essential to understanding the future direction of digital marketing strategies. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of trust-based marketing literature, as well as practical implications for industry practitioners in designing more authentic, sustainable, and trust-oriented communication strategies.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, aimed at examining the causal relationships between anti-influencer (X1) and peer-to-peer marketing (X2) on purchase intention (Y), with consumer trust (Z) acting as a mediating variable. The quantitative approach is selected as the study focuses on hypothesis testing and the objective, structured measurement of relationships among variables based on numerical data obtained from respondents.

The object of this research consists of active social media users who have been exposed to digital marketing content, including both influencer-generated content and peer recommendations. The population includes students of the Faculty of Economics and Business at Pancasila University who actively use social media and have experience interacting with online product or service content. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling, with criteria including active social media usage and prior exposure to product recommendations from both influencers and non-influencers. The sample size is determined based on the requirements of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS), which suggests a minimum of 5–10 times the number of indicators. Given that this study uses 24 indicators, the total sample size amounts to 144 respondents.

Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire distributed online using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The research instrument was developed based on indicators derived from relevant prior literature for each variable. The anti-influencer variable is measured through consumer skepticism toward influencer promotional content; peer-to-peer marketing is measured through the level of trust in peer recommendations; consumer trust is assessed based on perceptions of honesty, credibility, and reliability of information; and purchase intention is measured through respondents' intention and tendency to make purchases after receiving marketing information.

Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The SEM-PLS method was chosen due to its ability to analyze simultaneous relationships among latent variables, evaluate both structural and measurement models concurrently, and accommodate mediation models without requiring normally distributed data. The evaluation of the measurement model includes tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability, while the structural model is assessed through path coefficients, R-square values, and the significance of relationships among variables.

Hypothesis testing in this study is conducted by examining path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values obtained from bootstrapping procedures within the structural model. Additionally, the mediating effect of consumer trust is tested by analyzing the indirect effects of peer-to-peer marketing on purchase intention. The findings are expected to provide empirical insights into the shifting dynamics of consumer trust in digital marketing and to explain the strategic role of consumer trust in shaping purchase intention amid the rise of anti-influencer phenomena and the increasing prominence of peer-to-peer marketing.

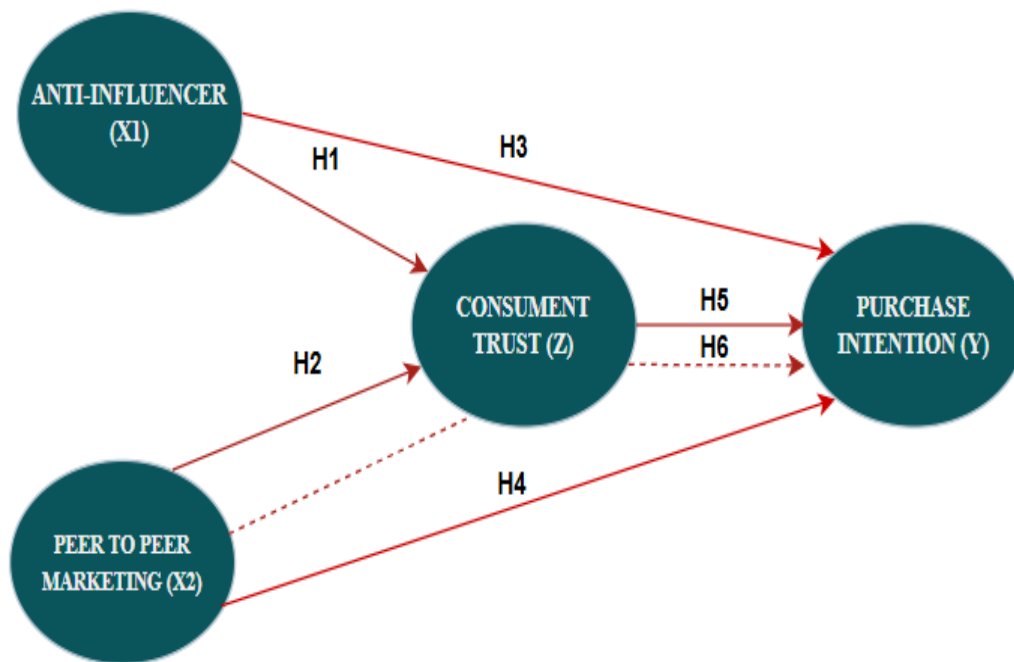


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Relationships among Anti-Influencer, Peer-to-Peer Marketing, Consumer Trust, and Purchase Intention

Table 1. Dimension and Indicator

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Source
Anti-Influencer (X1)	Skepticism toward influencer promotions	Consumers doubt the honesty of influencer recommendations	Audrezet, de Kerviler & Moulard (2020)
		Consumers perceive influencer promotions as often exaggerated	
	Content commercialization perception	Consumers recognize that influencer content is driven by sponsorships	
		Consumers feel that influencers prioritize product promotion over audience interests	
	Resistance to influencer influence	Consumers are not easily influenced by influencer recommendations	
		Consumers seek alternative sources of information before making a purchase	
Peer-to-Peer Marketing (X2)	Consumer recommendations	Consumers pay attention to recommendations from other users	Ismagilova et al. (2019)
		Consumers consider other users' experiences before making a purchase	
	Review credibility	Consumers perceive user reviews as more honest	

	Digital social interaction	Consumers consider user reviews to be more trustworthy	
		Consumers discuss products with other users	
		Consumers share product experiences on social media	
Consumer Trust (Z)	Credibility	Consumers trust the product information they receive	Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol (2018)
		Consumers perceive product information as accurate	
	Integrity	Consumers believe that information sources act honestly	
		Consumers perceive the information provided as transparent	
	Reliability	Consumers believe that the product is dependable	
		Consumers trust that the product delivers the benefits it promises	
Purchase Intention (Y)	Purchase interest	Consumers are interested in purchasing the product	Prentice et al. (2019)
		Consumers consider purchasing the product	
	Purchase preference	The product becomes the consumer's preferred choice	
		Consumers prefer the product over alternative options	
	Purchase intention	Consumers plan to purchase the product	
		Consumers are willing to purchase the product in the near future	

Result and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings of the study regarding the relationships among anti-influencer attitudes, peer-to-peer marketing, consumer trust, and purchase intention. The analysis begins with respondent characteristics, followed by the evaluation of the measurement model through validity and reliability testing. Subsequently, the structural model is assessed through explanatory power analysis and hypothesis testing to determine the direct and indirect relationships among the study variables. All statistical results are derived from SEM-PLS analysis using data collected from 144 respondents.

Respondent Characteristics

The demographic profile of respondents provides an overview of the sample used in this study. Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents based on gender and age categories.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	86	59.7

Male	58	40.3
Total	144	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–20 Years	82	56.9
21–23 Years	56	38.9
> 23 Years	6	4.2
Total	144	100.0

Based on table 2, the respondents in this study were predominantly female, accounting for 86 respondents or 59.7% of the total sample, while male respondents numbered 58 or 40.3%. This finding indicates that female respondents constituted a larger proportion of the participants in this study.

Furthermore, Table 4.2 shows that the majority of respondents were between 18 and 20 years old, totaling 82 respondents or 56.9%. Respondents aged 21–23 years accounted for 56 individuals or 38.9%, while those aged over 23 years represented only 6 respondents or 4.2%. These results indicate that the sample was largely composed of young adults belonging to Generation Z, a demographic group known for its active engagement with social media and high exposure to various forms of digital marketing, including influencer marketing and peer-to-peer marketing. Therefore, the characteristics of the respondents are considered highly relevant to the objectives of this study, which focus on the shift in consumer trust within the digital marketing environment.

Outer Model Testing

Table 3. Outer Model Testing

Variabel	Indicator	Outer Loading	Ave
Anti Influencer (X1)	X1P1	0,851	0,704
	X1P2	0,807	
	X1P3	0,852	
	X1P4	0,844	
	X1P5	0,842	
	X1P6	0,836	
Peer To Peer Marketing (X2)	X2P1	0,825	0,627
	X2P2	0,771	
	X2P3	0,756	
	X2P4	0,791	
	X2P5	0,799	
	X2P6	0,806	
Purchase Intention (Y)	Y1P1	0,757	0,633
	Y1P2	0,836	
	Y1P3	0,742	
	Y1P4	0,757	
	Y1P5	0,810	
	Y1P6	0,866	
Consumer Trust (Z)	Z1P1	0,768	0,594
	Z1P2	0,808	
	Z1P3	0,733	

	Z1P4	0,780	
	Z1P5	0,773	
	Z1P6	0,762	

Source: Research data

Based on the results of the outer model testing presented in Table 3, all indicators in this study meet the criteria for convergent validity, as evidenced by outer loading values exceeding 0.70. For the Anti-Influencer variable (X1), the outer loading values range from 0.807 to 0.852, with an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.704, indicating a strong capability of the construct in explaining the variance of its indicators. The Peer-to-Peer Marketing variable (X2) also satisfies the criteria, with outer loading values ranging from 0.756 to 0.825 and an AVE of 0.627, suggesting that the indicators consistently represent consumer-to-consumer communication.

Furthermore, the Purchase Intention variable (Y) demonstrates outer loading values between 0.742 and 0.866, with an AVE of 0.633, indicating that all indicators are valid in measuring consumers' purchase intention. Meanwhile, the Consumer Trust variable (Z) shows outer loading values ranging from 0.733 to 0.808 and an AVE of 0.594, thereby also meeting the convergent validity criteria. Overall, all constructs in this study are considered valid and suitable for further analysis within the structural (inner) model.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Fornel Lackers Testing

	X1	X2	Y	Z
X1	0,839			
X2	0,486	0,792		
Y	0,757	0,676	0,796	
Z	0,753	0,618	0,772	0,871

Based on the Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity test presented in Table 4, all constructs have met the required criteria, as the square root of AVE values (diagonal elements) are higher than the correlations with other constructs. Specifically, the square root AVE values for Anti-Influencer (X1), Peer-to-Peer Marketing (X2), Purchase Intention (Y), and Consumer Trust (Z) are 0.839, 0.792, 0.796, and 0.871, respectively, all of which exceed the inter-construct correlation values. These results indicate that each construct is empirically distinct and capable of measuring its intended concept accurately. Therefore, the model demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity and is suitable for further structural model analysis.

Table 5. Composite Reability Testing

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Anti Influencer (X1)	0,916	0,934
Peer To Peer Marketing (X2)	0,881	0,910
Purchase Intention (Y)	0,883	0,912
Consumer Trust (Z)	0,863	0,898

Source: Research data

Based on the reliability test results presented in Table 5, all variables in this study meet the criteria for good reliability. This is indicated by Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70, namely 0.916 for Anti-Influencer (X1), 0.881 for Peer-to-Peer Marketing (X2), 0.883 for Purchase Intention (Y), and 0.863 for Consumer Trust (Z). These

values suggest that all constructs demonstrate a high level of internal consistency, meaning that the indicators within each variable are able to measure the same underlying concept in a stable and consistent manner.

In addition, the Composite Reliability values for all variables also exceed 0.70, specifically 0.934 (X1), 0.910 (X2), 0.912 (Y), and 0.898 (Z). This indicates that each construct possesses strong reliability in representing the latent variables being measured. Overall, these results confirm that the research instrument is highly reliable and appropriate for further analysis within the structural (inner) model.

Inner Model Testing

Table 6. Adjusted R²

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Purchase Intention (Y)	0,838	0,835
Consumer Trust (Z)	0,650	0,645

Source: Research data

Based on the test results presented in Table 6, the Adjusted R Square value for the Purchase Intention variable (Y) is 0.835, indicating that 83.5% of the variance in consumers' purchase intention can be explained by the variables Anti-Influencer (X1), Peer-to-Peer Marketing (X2), and Consumer Trust (Z) within this research model. The remaining 16.5% is influenced by other variables the model. This value falls into the substantial category, suggesting that the model has a very strong predictive capability in explaining consumer purchase intention behavior.

Meanwhile, the Adjusted R Square value for the Consumer Trust variable (Z) is 0.645, indicating that 64.5% of the variance in consumer trust can be explained by Anti-Influencer (X1) and Peer-to-Peer Marketing (X2), while the remaining 35.5% is influenced by other factors not included in the research model. This value is categorized as moderate to strong, demonstrating that both independent variables contribute significantly to the formation of consumer trust in the context of digital marketing. Overall, these findings confirm that the research model has strong explanatory power and is suitable for further hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
H1	Anti Influencer (X1) -> Consumer Trust (Z)	-0,593	6,408	0,000
H2	Peer To Peer Marketing (X2) > Consumer Trust (Z)	0,329	3,044	0,002
H3	Anti Influencer (X1) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	-0,184	2,340	0,020
H4	Peer To Peer Marketing (X2) > Purchase Intention (Y)	0,194	2,963	0,003
H5	Consumer Trust (Z) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0,635	7,847	0,000

H6	Peer To Peer Marketing (X2) > Consumer Trust (Z) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0,209	3,393	0,001
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Source: Research data

Based on the hypothesis testing results presented in table 7, the Anti-Influencer variable (X1) is proven to have a negative and significant effect on Consumer Trust (Z), with a coefficient value of -0.593, T-statistics of 6.408, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the higher the level of consumer skepticism toward influencers, the lower the level of consumer trust in marketing information. In addition, Anti-Influencer also has a negative and significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y), with a coefficient of -0.184, T-statistics of 2.340, and a p-value of 0.020. These findings suggest that consumers' critical attitudes and resistance toward influencers can directly reduce purchase intention. Thus, hypotheses H1 and H3 are accepted, reinforcing that the anti-influencer phenomenon plays a role in shifting consumer trust patterns and decision-making in digital marketing.

Furthermore, the Peer-to-Peer Marketing variable (X2) is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Consumer Trust (Z) (coefficient 0.329; T-statistics 3.044; p-value 0.002) as well as on Purchase Intention (Y) (coefficient 0.194; T-statistics 2.963; p-value 0.003). This indicates that peer recommendations are able to increase trust while also encouraging purchase intention. Moreover, Consumer Trust (Z) itself has the strongest positive effect on Purchase Intention (Y), with a coefficient of 0.635, T-statistics of 7.847, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming that trust is a key factor in shaping purchasing decisions.

In the mediation effect testing, it was found that Peer-to-Peer Marketing has a significant effect on Purchase Intention through Consumer Trust (coefficient 0.209; T-statistics 3.393; p-value 0.001), thus hypotheses H2, H4, H5, and H6 are accepted. Overall, these results indicate a shift in consumer trust from influencers toward more authentic sources of information, namely fellow consumers, with consumer trust acting as a crucial mediating variable.

The results of this study indicate that anti-influencer has a negative and significant effect on consumer trust. This finding suggests that the higher the level of consumer skepticism toward content delivered by influencers, the lower the level of trust in marketing information. In the current digital context, consumers are increasingly aware of the commercial interests behind endorsement content, which leads to doubts about the authenticity and credibility of such information. When consumers perceive influencer content as overly promotional and not fully reflective of real experiences, their level of trust declines. This is consistent with research stating that influencer authenticity is a crucial factor in building consumer trust; therefore, when authenticity decreases, trust also weakens (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Peer-to-peer marketing has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust. Recommendations originating from fellow consumers are perceived as more authentic and trustworthy because they are based on real experiences rather than commercial interests. In the digital ecosystem, reviews, comments, and discussions among users become primary sources of information in shaping consumer perceptions. When consumers find consistency in information from multiple users, their trust in the product increases. This finding is in line with studies showing that electronic word-of-mouth has a significant influence in building consumer trust (Ismagilova et al., 2019).

The results also show that anti-influencer has a negative effect on purchase intention. This means that the higher the level of consumer distrust toward influencers, the lower their intention to purchase promoted products (Gerritsen & de Regt, 2025; Ali, 2025; Xu et al.,

2026). Consumers no longer fully rely on endorsements as a basis for decision-making, but instead become more selective in evaluating the credibility of information. This finding is consistent with research indicating that the credibility of information sources is a key factor influencing consumer purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Conversely, peer-to-peer marketing is proven to have a positive effect on purchase intention. Recommendations from fellow consumers can increase confidence and reduce uncertainty in the decision-making process. When consumers receive positive information from other users, they tend to feel more assured about product quality and are encouraged to make a purchase. This aligns with research stating that consumer-to-consumer communication has a strong influence on purchase intention, as it is considered more credible than traditional marketing communication (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Al Kurdi et al., 2022; Teixeira et al., 2023).

Furthermore, consumer trust is shown to have a positive effect on purchase intention. Trust becomes a key factor that links received information with purchasing decisions. When consumers have a high level of trust, they are more confident in making purchase decisions and perceive lower levels of risk. This is consistent with the commitment-trust theory, which states that trust is a fundamental element in influencing consumer behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; You et al., 2022).

Consumer trust mediates the effect of peer-to-peer marketing on purchase intention. This means that the influence of peer-to-peer marketing occurs not only directly but also indirectly through increased consumer trust. When consumers receive recommendations from fellow users, their trust in the product increases, which in turn encourages the formation of purchase intention. This finding reinforces research stating that trust serves as an important mechanism in the relationship between consumer experience and purchasing behavior (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002).

Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the effect of anti-influencer and peer-to-peer marketing on purchase intention, with consumer trust as a mediating variable. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the anti-influencer phenomenon has a negative impact on both consumer trust and purchase intention. This indicates that the increasing level of consumer skepticism toward influencer content reduces the effectiveness of influencer-based marketing strategies in building trust and encouraging purchasing decisions.

Conversely, peer-to-peer marketing is proven to have a positive effect on consumer trust and purchase intention. Recommendations from fellow consumers are perceived as more authentic, relevant, and trustworthy, thereby increasing consumer confidence in making purchasing decisions. In addition, consumer trust is shown to be a key factor that significantly influences purchase intention, while also acting as a mediating variable in the relationship between peer-to-peer marketing and purchase intention.

Overall, this study demonstrates a shift in consumer trust within digital marketing, where the influence of influencers is declining and being replaced by more trusted consumer-to-consumer communication. Therefore, marketers need to adapt strategies that emphasize authenticity, transparency, and real consumer experiences, as well as leverage the power of peer-to-peer marketing to build trust and enhance marketing effectiveness in the digital era.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that industry players and marketing practitioners reduce their reliance on overly commercial and less authentic influencer-based marketing strategies, and instead prioritize peer-to-peer marketing approaches grounded in real

consumer experiences. Companies should actively encourage the creation of user-generated content such as reviews, testimonials, and digital communities to organically build consumer trust, while also positioning consumers as active participants in the marketing process rather than passive targets. In addition, maintaining transparency, honesty, and consistency in marketing communication is essential to ensure that promotional messages accurately reflect actual product quality and user experiences. By fostering authentic interactions and trust-based relationships, companies can enhance marketing effectiveness and strengthen consumer purchase intentions in the evolving digital landscape.

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