

## **Meta Verified Trends in Indonesia Related to Brand's Endorsement Decisions**

### **Hubungan Tren Meta Verified di Indonesia dengan Keputusan Endorsement Merek**

**Vega Karina Andira Putri<sup>1</sup>, Fakhriy Dinansyah<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Multimedia Nusantara

Jalan Scientia Boulevard Gading, Curug Sangereng, Serpong, Kabupaten Tangerang, Banten  
15810

Email: <sup>1</sup>vega.andira@lecturer.umn.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>fakhriy.dinansyah@lecturer.umn.ac.id

Received : June 25, 2024 ; Revised: July 28, 2024; Accepted: August 28, 2024

#### **Abstrak**

*In June 2023, Meta Verified has been available and can be purchased in Indonesia. Meta Verified is a service that allows all Instagram and Facebook users to get a blue tick and several other benefits the company offers. The interest of Instagram users in subscribing to this service is immense because a blue tick accompanying the account name is considered to strengthen an individual's profile. The blue tick is believed to support the personal branding built by someone on Instagram to become more credible. So far, brands have a preference for choosing accounts with a blue tick because they are synonymous with their credibility in the eyes of the public. The presence of Meta Verified, which now allows all users to have a blue tick without showing credibility, is the background to the paper entitled "Meta Verified Trends in Indonesia Regarding Endorsement Decisions by Brands." This research aims to determine whether there has been a change in the preferences of endorsers who have blue ticks on Instagram. Researchers use the theory from Munnuka, Uusitalo, and Toivonen (2016) to see whether the credibility of an influencer apart from expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, is also seen from blue tick on their Instagram account. This research paper uses a case study method with data collection techniques through interviews with brands who frequently endorse on Instagram social media. The conclusion of this research shows that brands still check whether the blue tick that influencer get are organic or through subscription to consider their advertising budget. Brands place a larger endorsement budget for Instagram accounts with a blue tick that does not use subscription services or for those that get the blue tick organically.*

**Keywords:** Advertising; Credibility; Endorsement; Instagram; Meta Verified,

#### **Abstrak**

Pada bulan Juni 2023, Meta Verified telah tersedia dan dapat dibeli di Indonesia. Meta Verified adalah layanan yang memungkinkan semua pengguna Instagram dan Facebook mendapatkan centang biru dan beberapa keuntungan lain yang ditawarkan perusahaan. Minat pengguna Instagram untuk berlangganan layanan ini sangat besar karena centang biru yang menyertai nama akun dianggap dapat memperkuat profil seseorang. Centang biru dipercaya dapat mendukung personal branding yang dibangun seseorang di Instagram menjadi lebih kredibel. Selama ini, brand memiliki preferensi untuk memilih akun dengan

centang biru karena identik dengan kredibilitasnya di mata publik. Kehadiran Meta Verified yang kini memungkinkan semua pengguna memiliki centang biru tanpa menunjukkan kredibilitas menjadi latar belakang penelitian yang berjudul “Tren Meta Verified di Indonesia Terkait Keputusan Endorsement oleh Brand.” Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah ada perubahan preferensi endorser yang memiliki centang biru di Instagram. Peneliti menggunakan teori dari Munnuka, Uusitalo, dan Toivonen (2016) untuk melihat apakah kredibilitas seorang influencer selain dari keahlian, kepercayaan, dan daya tarik, juga dilihat dari centang biru pada akun Instagram mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kasus dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara kepada brand yang sering melakukan endorse di media sosial Instagram. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa brand masih mengecek apakah centang biru yang didapatkan influencer tersebut organik atau melalui langganan untuk mempertimbangkan anggaran iklan mereka. Brand menempatkan anggaran endorsement yang lebih besar untuk akun Instagram dengan centang biru yang tidak menggunakan layanan berlangganan atau yang mendapatkan centang biru secara organik.

**Kata kunci:** Dukungan; Instagram; Kredibilitas; Meta Verified; Periklanan

## **1. Introduction**

In today's digital era, every social media user has the same opportunity to get space to promote themselves. Promoting oneself, activities, interests, successes, and even problems and lessons experienced is one of the Personal Branding efforts (Haroen, 2014). This opportunity to promote yourself on social media makes personal branding unique and can benefit those who successfully carry out their branding. For example, it can expand connections, develop trust, and build credibility (Hariyati & Wirapraja, 2018). The vast benefits obtained make individuals develop strategies and content based on the image they want to present to the public on social media.

More and more individuals are currently getting the title of celebrity or influencer because they consistently present their work, daily life, and various activities to become increasingly known to their followers. Good personal branding on social media can show the difference between a person's character and

others. Another advantage that individuals who successfully form good personal branding on social media also get is the opportunity to collaborate with many brands. Apart from competing to present various information about brands to the audience through various promotional tools, as many as 93% of brand marketing teams in Indonesia use Influencer Marketing strategies (digitalskola, 2023).

According to Sudha & Sheena (2017), Influencer Marketing is identifying and activating individuals who influence a particular target audience to become part of a product campaign to increase reach, sales, and consumer relationships. This Influencer Marketing strategy is considered adequate because today's consumers are more likely to trust information that does not come from the brand directly but from third parties who are also considered consumers of the brand or product (Joesyiana, 2018).

An influencer is someone on social media with many followers,

and they have the power to influence their followers. An individual can be an influencer if he has abilities, skills, knowledge, or uniqueness expressed in his content that can inspire his followers. Indonesia is ranked 8th in activities following influencers on social media (Hootsuite Data, 2023). This means that influencers in Indonesia have an essential role in influencing their followers on social media. That makes many brands choose influencers as brand representatives to introduce products and convey various promotional information to the target audience so that the audience can easily be influenced by the brand message.

Influencers who are chosen to promote a brand are known as endorsers. Endorsers are individuals or groups who convey opinions about a product, service, or idea so that consumers trust their opinions and beliefs and search for or try the advertised product (Belch & Belch, 2021). The power of endorsers in supporting advertising activities makes brands actively endorse. Endorser selection is often done, especially for influencers with an audience similar to the brand's target consumers. This is because consumers are more interested in messages conveyed by endorsers who are similar to themselves (Angelia & Susilo, 2023).

This is where personal branding built by influencers plays a decisive role. Brands can assess whether the influencer suits the brand through the characteristics visible from their social media accounts. In an influencer career, personal branding determines the charm of oneself that "sells" so that brands will pay

attention to it. However, solid personal branding also needs to be accompanied by recognition of credibility in the eyes of the public. Unique strategies must be implemented to improve one's social achievements and get good feedback on social media (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). In building a significant number of followers on social media and influencing their followers, the influencer's credibility is crucial in persuading the audience (Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016).

Credibility is a quality, capability, or strength related to the emergence of a sense of trust in someone. An influencer considered credible as a communicator will find it easier to inspire the audience's trust in their content. The information conveyed by the influencer will then be considered a valid source of information and even used as an inspirational figure who can persuade the audience. Therefore, an influencer needs to manage a good impression virtually to form a persona or self-image that can be trusted. Unique strategies must be implemented to improve social achievement and get good feedback on social media (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). One of the efforts made by influencers to show credibility in their field, apart from regularly developing content and building interaction with their followers, is by getting a blue tick along with the account name.

A blue tick accompanying the account name on Instagram has long been considered necessary. Previously verified accounts known as Meta blue ticks were given to well-known public figures such as artists, politicians, executives, and

organizations. Verification can be obtained in challenging ways, such as having several reports in national media to prove they are public figures. The type of content and interactions that occur in the account must also follow self-reporting.

So far, brands have a greater preference for endorsers for accounts with a blue tick because it is synonymous with their credibility in the eyes of the public. Influencers also need help to create content that the public can accept to get the blue tick to attract more brands to place product endorsements on their social media accounts. However, in June 2023, Meta Verified will be available and can be purchased in Indonesia. Meta Verified is a service that allows all Instagram and Facebook users to get a blue tick and some other benefits the company offers—for example, increasing the authenticity and security of all Meta services by paying a monthly subscription fee of IDR 100,000 – IDR 130,000. The services offered are account protection and direct contact with Instagram if there are problems.

Many influencers take advantage of this feature to increase their credibility in the eyes of brands and get endorsements with greater opportunities. Because endorsers themselves are included in the paid advocacy category, namely advocates who receive payment from brands to form an engagement with consumers (Nugraha, 2014), it is believed that influencers with a blue tick have the opportunity to get more significant endorsement fee offers.

The presence of Meta Verified, which now allows all users to have a blue tick without showing credibility,

is the background of this paper. This research aims to determine whether there has been a change in the preferences of endorsers who have blue ticks on Instagram after the Meta Verified service arrived in Indonesia.

## **2. Literature Review**

In a communication process, the communicator's credibility is crucial in persuading the audience (Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016). The communicators in question can include anyone, including influencers with significant followers on social media. In building the number of followers and influencing the audience, an influencer needs to create a sense of trust among the audience in their content to get positive feedback on social media. Therefore, credibility is a crucial factor that a communicator must have in a communication process. One of the concepts of credibility is discussed comprehensively in Source Credibility Theory, which was first put forward by Carl I Hovland (Winoto, 2015).

This theory assumes that an individual will be more accessible to persuade when the communicator who conveys a communication message shows himself as a credible person. It will also be easier for the individual to process information and form an attitude if the source has expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016). In other words, communicators with high credibility will more effectively influence someone's views than communicators with low credibility.

Influencers are called "social leaders" because they have the significant social capital to lead online communities (Forsyth, 2015). This is because influencers are considered credible messengers by their followers. Aditya's research in 2021 shows that the source's credibility increases awareness of the company and can determine the attitude of Indonesian consumers towards a brand advertisement.

According to Munnuka, Uusitalo, and Toivonen (2016), there are three factors of source credibility. The first factor is expertise. The source's competence level or expertise dramatically influences a person's view as a message recipient. Expertise includes the message's recipient's impression regarding the communicator's ability to master information regarding the material or topic being discussed. Audiences consider expert factors when deciding whether to receive communication messages from an influencer. Therefore, an influencer with expertise in a particular field will find it easier to gain the trust of their audience. This expertise can depend on experience, education, extensive insight or knowledge, training, social status, and so on. A source can be considered an expert when his knowledge is recognized and trusted regarding a subject matter.

Second, trustworthiness. The quality of the communicator's personality, which includes honest, sincere, polite, fair, and ethical behavior, can influence the message recipient's trust in the degree of truth of the information conveyed (Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016). A communicator can be a

trusted source if he provides objective information, does not intend to manipulate, does not take advantage of the audience, and accepts message recommendations. Trust in the communicator reflects that the message is correct and accurate. Likewise, an influencer is a communicator. Through content on social media, an influencer still needs to convey information objectively, not be manipulative, and not take advantage of the audience to accept the message recommendations conveyed.

The last factor is attractiveness. Attractiveness refers to someone considered attractive in physical terms, such as appearance, and non-physical terms, such as personality, thereby giving rise to liking, familiarity, and similarity with the audience. These attributes play a role in the effectiveness of the message conveyed. Moreover, a person's attractiveness factor is essential in forming an impression, especially at the initial stage. An attractive attitude significantly affects audience attitudes (Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong, 2017). Individuals who have attractiveness both in physical terms, such as appearance, and non-physical, such as personality, have the potential to become influencers. This attraction can include an influencer's physical appearance that looks attractive and charming, an influencer's personality that is considered funny or clever in speaking, and so on. Influencers with outstanding attractiveness can attract the audience's attention and then follow them. Persuasion is usually ineffective if the source is attractive and even disliked (Winoto, 2015).

Thus, an influencer needs to have aspects of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness to be able to convey messages effectively. The three source credibility factors proposed by Munnuka, Uusitalo, and Toivonen (2016) will be used as the primary reference in compiling the interview guide for this research. Researchers are looking to find out whether the brand that is the informant considers these three factors in determining endorsers based on their credibility.

### **3. Research Method**

This study uses a descriptive analysis method, namely a method with an initial stage of explaining various facts in the object of study, then studied using a specific analytical knife (Ratna, 2004). Data collection methods were carried out using interviews and observations. Interviews are used as a data collection technique to find problems that must be researched and also if the researcher wants to know things from respondents in more depth. At the same time, observation is needed to obtain empirical facts that can be seen visually to obtain a new perspective in understanding the phenomenon being studied (Widodo, 2012).

The informants for this research are marketing and digital activation brands that have actively endorsed Instagram on social media for several years. The brand comes from the same industry, namely products for mothers and children, but has different categories: pharmaceuticals, education, and formula milk. Mother and children product was chosen because its is an industry that is active in put advertising in social media,

especially in form influencer endorsement. Pharmaceuticals, education, and formula milk are product category that actively utilizes the growing number of the mom influencer profession among mothers in Indonesia. Observations were made by studying the forms of endorsement made by the three brands to mom influencers on social media Instagram.

## **4. Research and Discussion**

### *4.1. Social Media Endorsement Activities on Instagram*

In recent years, influencer marketing has become one of social media's most critical and proliferating marketing trends (Glucksman, 2017). One industry that actively carries out endorsements, especially to celebrities or public figures and micro and macro influencers, is mother and child needs brands. The resource persons for this research were the Marketing Team from the pharmaceutical, education, and formula milk industry categories. These three brands collaborate actively with influencers on the Instagram platform. Every month, brands collaborate with a minimum of 30 influencers which are included in micro, macro, and mega categories.

**Table 1.** Number of endorsement collaborations by brands

<b>BRAND</b>	<b>ENDORSEMENT / MONTH</b>
Pharmaceutical	Collaborate with 1 mega-influencers, 10 micro-influencers, and 30-50 micro-influencers.

Education	Collaborate with 30 - 40 micro-influencers and macro-influencers
Formula Milk	Collaborate with 2 mega-influencers, 20 macro-influencers, and 50 micro-influencers

Source: Authors (2023)

In general, according to Dogra (2019), influencers can be categorized into three types, namely the Mega-influencers or celebrities. Celebrities can easily influence consumers around the world through advertising (Dogra, 2019). Mega influencers are celebrities, artists, actors, athletes, etc., who represent the initial form of influencers before social media existed. Mega influencers can only drive engagement rates of 2-5%. This is relatively low even though they have a broad reach of up to one million followers. Mega influencers need to improve their ability to drive desired actions from consumers and provide low brand relevance. This is a consideration for brands to refrain from collaborating with Mega Influencers as often as with micro and macro influencers because the level of interaction could be higher.

As stated by AN, 38 years old, Digital Marketing Manager Pharmaceutical Brand, who is responsible in determining the collaboration with influencers and make approval for endorsement budget "In terms of exposure, it's okay. Good for raising awareness. But in our opinion, interaction, and engagement are lacking. These celebrities tend not to reply to Instagram comments or Direct

Messages because there might be too many coming in. Likewise with the content, usually, it is hard selling, so it makes the audience aware from the start that it is advertising" (Interview, September 2023)

Therefore, the endorsement schedule is still mostly placed on micro-influencers. The second type of influencer is Macro-influencer. Influencer macros are often used to explain influencer marketing. They differ from other influencers because alternative consumer behavior occurs from communication between ordinary consumers and a mass audience of strangers (McQuarrie, 2013). Macro influencers influence one or more topics that strategically place individuals from all types of society within a social network. They are often considered credible and reliable due to their knowledge and expertise in the product or service. When consumers want to buy a new product, they prefer to follow recommendations from macro-influencers because it can help consumers reduce the risk of purchasing unknown products.

The third is Micro-influencers. Micro-influencers or micro-celebrities boast popularity over the web using videos, blogs, and social networking sites. They are portrayed as authentic and trustworthy to their followers because they are well-known among certain people (Marwick, 2013). Lv et al. (2015) said that micro-influencers positively impact brand attitudes and loyalty because they can recommend things to their followers on a large scale. Hence, they are very capable of encouraging consumer desires. Micro-influencers can trigger

engagement of up to 26-60%, so they can be called "everyday consumers." "Micro-influencers have better engagement than mega and macro influencers because they have followers who are their friends and people they know. And most importantly, they are usually quicker to respond" (Interview, Marketing & Social Media Activation Manager Education Brand, September 2023)

The choice of social media used is Instagram. Both pharmaceutical and formula milk brands are also endorsed on TikTok but not as much as on Instagram because the target audience is mothers with children aged 2 - 12 years, according to the Instagram user profile, namely 28.7% of users from the 25-34 year age group. Women dominate users at 55.5%. The number of Instagram users continues to increase. Based on Napoleon Cat data, 116.16 million Instagram users are in Indonesia as of August 2023. This number has increased by 6.54% compared to the previous month, which was 109.03 million users (Databoks, 2023).

Educational brands also added that educational content generates greater engagement on Instagram than on TikTok. On TikTok, engagement is greater for entertainment content. In addition, the brand wants to emphasize promotional content through good visuals. The selection of endorsers is also focused on influencers who can produce videos with good visual quality. Making Reels or Instagram Story videos requires more effort. Brands need an excellent visual appearance of the product with quality talent interaction with clear and crisp images. This can be seen

from the large number of videos that are not of good quality, and even if they do not use good editing techniques, they can go viral on TikTok. This differs from Instagram, which focuses on visuals (Marketinginasia.com, 2022).

PIS, 37 years old, Marketing Manager of Formula Milk agrees that video production by content creator on Instagram is different in terms of quality from Tiktok content creator "Most of the content creators on TikTok make makeshift videos because the videos are more natural and don't look like they are uploaded by reliable content creators who have the opportunity to get into FYP. Meanwhile, the content created by influencers for the Instagram platform is produced with more intention." (Interview, October 2023)

These three brands feel that endorsements are effective in helping their marketing goals, even though there are differences in the purpose of the endorsement. Because pharmaceutical brands are only five years old and have strong competitors, they aim to create awareness. Meanwhile, educational brands aim to increase sales of class slots. Unlike formula milk products, apart from encouraging purchasing actions with fellow mothers, it also creates confidence in choosing the right formula milk. By the advantages of endorsements stated by Drewniany & Jewler (2014), there are several advantages of doing endorsements, namely being able to build awareness, build credibility or trust in the product, reach a broader market, and make the brand stand out more than competitors.



Each brand has its criteria for choosing endorsers, but both look for endorsers with the same character as their target audience. This is because consumers are more interested in messages conveyed by endorsers who are similar to themselves (Angelia & Susilo, 2023). For example, a product from a pharmaceutical brand is a medicine for reducing fever in children. The endorsers chosen are mothers with children aged 2 – 12 years (the safe age for taking the drug) and who care about their children's health. For educational products, we are looking for mothers with children aged 7 – 12 years who like to support extra activities for their children and mothers with children who have a hobby of playing games. Dairy products are looking for endorsers for mothers aged 2 – 12 years who like to consume formula milk. Other additions depend on the product category, such as mothers with children allergic to cow's milk for soya milk products. The search for influencers is carried out by searching through Instagram profiles, talent management, or through the mother content creator community.

#### 4.2. Collaboration with Blue-Ticked Endorsers

The three brands have collaborated with blue tick accounts, most of whom are Indonesian artists who are mothers with children aged according to the brand's audience criteria. For pharmaceutical and formula milk brands, collaboration is in the form of endorsements and contracts as brand ambassadors. One form of contract with a brand ambassador is to regularly post brand promos in form Photo Feed, Reels, and Instagram

Story. As can be seen from the following image, Donita Nugroho, one of the Indonesian artist uploaded photo feed showing product as a form of her collaboration as a brand ambassador of pharmaceutical brand named Proris.

**Figure 1.** Brand Promo Feed Photo on Brand Ambassador's Instagram Account



Source: Instagram.com (2023)

In contrast to pharmaceutical brands, educational brands choose to collaborate with blue tick endorsers who are not public figures but Instagram celebrities, namely mothers who have many followers on social media because the content is followed and awaited by mothers. This is due to the engagement issue, which is felt need more from public figures to their followers. The brand also revealed that Instagram

celebrities like to give bonus content to increase interaction with followers, for example, by explaining more on Instagram Stories.

Regarding the endorsement budget, the brand admits that accounts with a blue tick offer a higher rate card than those without a blue tick. The magnitude can also be said to be very large. Meanwhile, influencers starting their careers will open collaborations on endorsement services at affordable costs and even open semi-barter collaboration or product bartering forms. "The rate is not 2 or 3 times that of ordinary influencers, sometimes up to tenfold" (Interview, PIS, Digital Marketing Manager of formula milk brand, October 2023). As seen in the image below, Rachel Venya, a female selebgram, who has 8 million followers offers a video rate 80 million rupiah, while the macro-influencer rate is only around 7 million rupiah.

**Figure 2.** Public Figure with Blue-Ticked Rate Card



Source: Instagram.com (2023)

Even though the budget is high, they still endorse public figures with a blue tick because the results are good for creating awareness and getting considerable exposure. As stated by (De Veirmen, 2017), influencers are considered trustworthy by their followers and can help spread product information and form brand awareness on online social networks.

#### *4.3. The Emergence of the Meta Verified Trend Amid Endorsement Decision-Making*

Regarding the presence of Meta Verified in Indonesia, the three brands already knew about this even before it was officially launched. This is because brands always research trends in the world of influencers. When they were officially able to subscribe, the brand admitted that it was surprised because many of the influencers the brand followed had already received a blue tick icon matching their name. Indeed, since it was launched, influencers immediately subscribed because they felt it could open up more significant opportunities to be selected as an endorser. This is because a blue tick accompanying the account name is considered to strengthen the online presentation built by the influencer.

Presenting yourself in cyberspace has its advantages. This is because the individual, as the performer of the presentation, can adjust and have more control over the self-presentation they wish to display, considering that there are no other people physically present to dispute the self-presentation. This is different from self-presentation carried out

face-to-face, where there are more limitations because other people who meet face-to-face can immediately assess the self-presentation that a person displays. Apart from that, another advantage is that online self-presentation can be shown to a broader audience (Retberg, 2018).

Influencers rely on online self-presentation on social media. Influencers try to present themselves to make themselves liked and attractive in the eyes of their followers and the wider audience. They need to manage the impression of the content they upload so they can get good feedback on social media. Self-presentation on social media is a form of experiment carried out by individuals to gain self-identity (Huang, 2014).

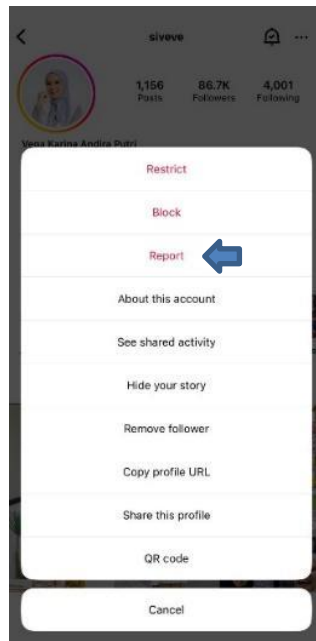
The benefits gained if we succeed in building an excellent online presentation, as stated by Goffman (Aiyuda & Syakarofath, 2019), are (1) To gain social acceptance and approval. Self-presentation is carried out to gain social acceptance and approval from others. In the realm of influencers, the expected acceptance is to be accepted as an endorser of a brand product. (2) To establish credibility. Self-presentation is carried out to build credibility through the abilities, skills, or knowledge possessed. For example, a fashion influencer who presents himself by always dressing fashionably and following existing fashion trends to build credibility as a fashion influencer. (3) To achieve personal goals or outcomes. Each influencer certainly has their personal goals or results, for example, related to increasing the endorsement card

rate every year and being quickly approved by the brand.

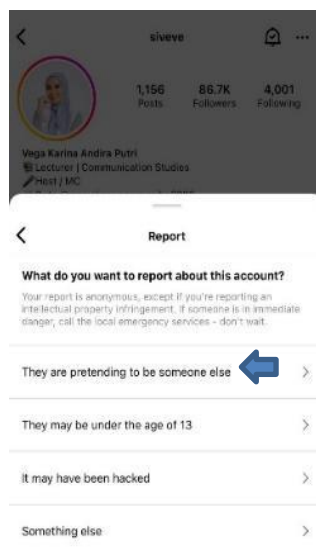
The three brands have also experienced more outstanding rate card applications from influencers than before. However, this phenomenon is seen by brands as forming false credibility. Therefore, the brand decided to wait to accept the budget increase since it learned that the public could check the status of the blue tick obtained organically or paid. "Now everyone can get and subscribe to Blue Tick, so we don't just accept the bigger budgets from influencers because we're afraid it will just be fake credibility. We will also continue to appreciate endorsers who get the blue tick organically. We check first whether they get the blue tick organically or by subscription" (Interview, Marketing Manager Pharmaceutical, September 2023).

Currently, the difference between organic and paid blue tick status can be seen by the public, so brands will check this way regarding the decision to accept rate cards sent by influencers. Here are the steps: (1). Choose one profil on Instagram - Open account - click three dots at the top right of the profile - Click Report. (2). Click 'They are pretending to be someone else. (3). Click 'A celebrity or public figure'. (4). If the account name appears, then the account is verified organically, not by subscription.

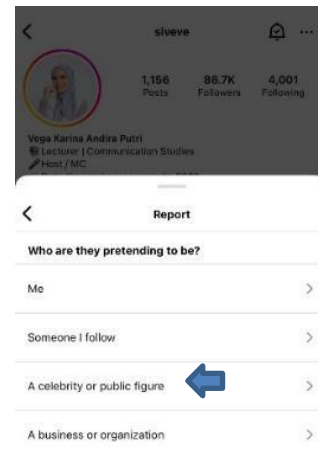
**Figure 3. Meta Verified Check Stage Step 1**



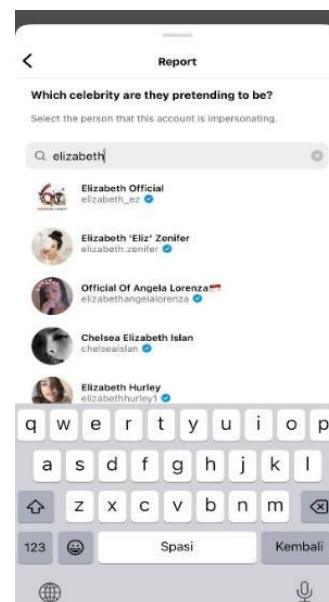
**Figure 4. Meta Verified Check Stage Step 2**



**Figure 5. Meta Verified Check Stage Step 3**



**Figure 6. Meta Verified Check Stage Step 4**



After checking, brands still tend to prioritize selecting organic blue tick endorsers over verified accounts obtained by subscription. However, it turns out that brands only sometimes prioritize influencer accounts with a blue tick. From the start, educational brands have paid little attention to blue tick accounts because, for brands, what is most important is the

endorser's ability to create review content and expertise in persuading their followers. This is related to a person's credibility as an influencer.

#### *4.4. Meta Verified and Credibility*

So far, individuals have struggled to get a blue tick on their Instagram social media accounts because they see the many good opportunities that can come their way. Personal accounts with a blue tick are considered to be influential public figures, so many parties offer collaboration. Not only as an endorser, but we can also be invited to collaborate as a brand ambassador, resource person, or even become a talent.

However, the brand stated that it is not always necessary to collaborate with accounts with a blue tick because the influencer's profile itself is more important. This profile can be seen clearly on social media by doing personal branding. Johnson (2019) emphasizes that anyone owns that personal branding and not just those who have privilege. This is so that any individual can define themselves to "sell" themselves to others, especially in the daily communication process via social media.

Haroen, in his book, citing McNally & Speak (2014), states that three main components become the strength of a brand or personal branding. The first is uniqueness. A solid personal brand has its characteristics (Haroen, 2014). A person adapts to this characteristic and will differentiate himself from other people. A person's uniqueness can be determined by their physical appearance, specialization, or character. Pharmaceutical brands

choose mothers who have distinctive characteristics, such as having consistent content about parenting, children's tourist attractions, or sharing about baby food menu. Accounts that have characteristics like this are considered to be brands whose content will always be awaited and followed by their audience.

Second, relevance. A solid personal brand must have relevance to a person's character and have something important in the eyes of other people. A person must state their brand well and positively so that the person is helpful and functions according to their abilities. The relevance of the mother's profile to the brand's target audience is also highly considered by educational brands. Due to the services offered by coding learning, the profiles chosen are working mothers, teaching mothers, or housewives who actively participate in their children's education. She is also often seen accompanying his children in various activities outside of school.

Formula milk brands also have the same preferences as pharmaceutical and education brands but also have other considerations that are in line with the third component, namely consistency. A personal brand is formed over a short period. Therefore, there must be consistency with the personal brand that has been determined previously. Profiles of mothers who consistently create content related to daily life with their children will be prioritized for selection as endorsers. This is related to dairy products, which are synonymous with parental love, which is always there to accompany children's growth and development.

Apart from that, consistency in reviewing products for children's daily needs is also an added value seen by the brand. This means that the audience is used to seeing influencers share product information so that when carrying out promotional activities, the brand will seem more natural. Successful personal branding in line with the brand strengthens the formation of collaboration between influencers and brands.

However, it turns out there are other reasons that will convince brands to collaborate with an influencer, namely credibility as an influencer or content creator. For brands, apart from having an appropriate mother's profile, account engagement is also essential. In the process of building the number of followers and influencing the audience, an influencer needs to create a sense of trust from the audience in their content to get positive feedback on social media and get high engagement rates. Therefore, credibility is a crucial factor that a communicator must have in a communication process, especially in conveying brand messages to the audience.

The process of selecting endorsers according to their credibility is carried out by the Digital Marketing team or by the Digital Agency. The criteria that determine the credibility of the influencers chosen by the three brands are the same, namely the number of followers, engagement rate, and ability to produce content. For example, pharmaceutical brands have a minimum criteria of 30,000 followers and good-quality videos and photos. This is included in the

three factors of source credibility according to Munnuka, Uusitalo, and Toivonen (2016); the first is expertise. Audiences consider expert factors when making decisions about whether to receive communication messages from an influencer. Therefore, an influencer who has expertise in a particular field will find it easier to gain the trust of their audience.

The skill of becoming an influencer is, of course, the skill of producing content, which can be seen from the quality of the photos and video content. The better the production quality, the more convincing the audience will be of the message and visuals contained in the endorsement content. The second factor is trustworthiness. The quality of the communicator's personality, which includes honest, sincere, polite, fair, and ethical behavior, can influence the message recipient's trust in the degree of truth of the information conveyed (Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016)—all three brands like influencers who consistently review products, especially those who provide honest reviews. When an influencer often shares products for children's needs and is proven to be suitable for the audience, it will create a sense of trust when reviewing other products. Trust in the communicator reflects that the message received by the communicator is considered correct and by reality. Likewise, an influencer is a communicator. Through content on social media, an influencer still needs to convey information objectively, not be manipulative, and not take advantage

of the audience to accept the message recommendations conveyed.

The third factor, which is also a factor in influencer credibility, is attractiveness. Attractiveness in question refers to someone who is considered attractive both in physical terms, such as appearance, and non-physical terms, such as personality, thereby giving rise to liking, familiarity, and similarity with the audience. This factor of a person's attractiveness plays a vital role in forming an impression, especially at the initial stage. That attractiveness has a significant effect on the audience's attitude toward each message conveyed by the communicator (Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong, 2017). As stated by the formula milk brand below:

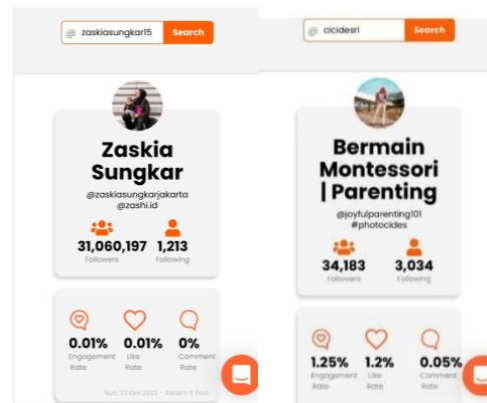
"We like a cheerful mother who has an attractive profile from her appearance to the way she speaks. Appearance doesn't mean it has to be beautiful, just neat and pleasing to the eye. We also look for mothers who have a natural but persuasive speaking style so that all messages can be received happily by their followers" (Interview, Marketing & Social Media Activation Manager Education Brand September 2023)

This natural and persuasive speaking style is attractive to brands because most brands prefer to use an implicit type of endorsement. After all, it seems indirect, subtle, and more natural (Angelia & Susilo, 2023). Influencers with outstanding attractiveness can attract the attention of the audience and then follow them. This is related to the influencer's opportunity to gain more followers. The number of followers is something that brands consider because the

followers they gain are the result of the audience's interest in the content created by the influencer.

Another finding apart from this third factor is engagement (interaction/relationship), which the brand also pays attention to. This interaction can be seen from the Engagement Rate, which can be calculated using applications such as Analisa.io, inBeat, Allstar, and Phlanx.

**Figure 4.** Engagement Rate Calculation Results Using Analisa.io Application



Source: Analisa.io (2023)

This engagement rate is considered necessary by brands because it is a metric, tool, or term that is often associated as a positive indicator of an account to assess how good the interaction or relationship between the influencer and the audience or the audience's attention to the influencer's account is. The number of likes and comments received on Feed and Reels, Reels views, Instagram Story views, and also the audience's response to the Instagram Story posted determines the Engagement Rate figure obtained. This figure will then be compared with the number of followers.



"The number of followers is good, but currently, the most important thing is the engagement rate. It's useless if you have lots of followers but don't interact with your followers well. Over time, you can lose followers or followers become too lazy to respond to the content" (Interview, Digital Marketing Manager of formula milk brand, October 2023). So interaction and relationships with the audience are things that influencers always strive to maintain to continue to get high numbers and show their credibility in the eyes of the audience and also the brand.

## **5. Conclusion**

This research departs from the trend of offering Meta Verified services by Instagram to its users, which gives hope to influencers to get more collaboration and bigger endorsement budgets from brands. The brand itself experienced confusion when it saw that many influencers had a blue tick symbol accompanying their account name. So far, brands have collaborated a lot with blue tick accounts who are public figures. The goal is to get extensive exposure and awareness because most of them are macro to mega influencers (followers 100,000 – more than 1,000,000 people). This form of collaboration is not just an endorsement but also a brand ambassador, so the endorsement budget spent is larger. The brand also admitted that the rate cards submitted by influencers with a blue tick were greater than those of nano and micro-influencers by up to 10 times. Therefore, this research contributes to presenting an overview from the brand marketing side in looking at the trend of influencers

subscribing to the Meta Verified service and its influence on endorsement decisions in terms of preferences for budget placement.

This research has limitations, namely that it only examines brands that actively endorse on Instagram from the mother and child needs category as sources. Through this research, it is known that brands do not change their preferences and placement of endorsement budgets towards influencers with a blue tick. The brand will first check whether the acquisition of the blue tick is organic or from subscriptions. Moreover, brands also collaborate more with micro-influencers because they are considered to have higher interactions with their audiences and can convey brand messages naturally, compared to mega-influencers with blue ticks.

Another consideration is the similarity between the influencer's audience and the brand's audience, which will be seen from the personal branding built by the influencer on social media. Influencers who have uniqueness, audience relevance, and consistency in creating content will have the opportunity to be selected as endorsers. Strong personal branding that suits the audience's character is an essential factor in determining endorsers. However, more than just personal branding is needed; credibility as an influencer is the most important thing. Although the blue tick is synonymous with the credibility of the account owner, brands also look at credibility from another factor, such as the influencer's expertise in producing content, the trust that is built in the eyes of the influencer's audience, and the appeal that can fascinate the audience. Apart



from these three factors, it was also found that engagement is a determining factor that influences endorsement decisions. Brands often carry out engagement rate calculations to analyze the level of interaction and relationships built between account owners and audiences.

The novelty of this research is knowing that a person's online credibility can be seen from verified mark from official social media. The previous research has shown that the selection of influencers was seen from the account persona and engagement level, this research shows brands also pay attention to the blue tick obtained by influencers as a consideration for placing a larger endorsement budget.

The practical implications of this research can be used by marketing and branding practitioners as a consideration in selecting and managing influencers when implementing online marketing strategies. Academically, these findings can be used as concept in media or advertising planning subject especially the use of influencer endorsement. It is recommended that further research look for quantitative generalizations to measure how much influence the blue tick has on brands' decisions in selecting and using influencers.

### Acknowledgment

The authors received support for the research from Universitas Multimedia Nusantara. Researchers also thank informants from pharmaceutical, education, and formula milk brands for permitting researchers to conduct field research

### References

- Aiyuda, N., & Syakarofath, N. A. (2019). Presentasi diri Online di Sosial Media (Instagram dan Facebook). *Psychopolytan (Jurnal Psikologi)*.
- Angelia, C. R., & Susilo, D. (2023). *Endorser, Influencer, Instagram: Imaji Konsumsi di Era Digital*. Sidoarjo: Indomedia Pustaka.
- Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. (2021). *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Databoks. (2023, September 26). *Pengguna Instagram RI Tembus 100 juta orang per April 2023, Terbanyak ke-4 di Dunia*. Retrieved from <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/09/26/pengguna-instagram-ri-tembus-100-juta-orang-per-april-2023-terbanyak-ke-4-di-dunia>
- De Veirmen, M. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising: 40th anniversary*.
- Dewi, H. (2014). *Personal Branding*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- digitalskola. (2023, August 5). *digitalskola.com*. Retrieved from [digitalskola.com: https://digitalskola.com/blog/](https://digitalskola.com/blog/)

- digital-marketing/kol-influencer
- Dogra, K. (2019). The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Brand Loyalty towards Luxury Cosmetics Brands : Comparison of Generation Z and Millennial Master Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Degree. *No. June*.
- Drewniany, B. L., & Jewler, A. J. (2014). *Creative strategy in advertising, 11 th edition*. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Forsyth, A. (2015). What Is a Walkable Place? The Walkability Debate in Urban Design. *Urban Design International*, 274-292.
- Glucksman, M. (2017). The rise of social media influencer marketing on lifestyle branding: A case study of Lucie Fink. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communication.*, 77-87.
- Hariyati, N. T., & Wirapraja, A. (2018). *Pengaruh Influencer Marketing Sebagai Strategi Pemasaran Digital Era Modern*. Bandung: Universitas Padjajaran.
- Haroen, D. (2014). *Personal Branding*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Hootsuite Data. (2023). *Social Media Trends 2023*. Retrieved from Hootsuite.com: <https://www.hootsuite.com/research/social-trends>
- Huang, H. (2014). Self-presentation tactics in social media. International Conference on Social Science . *Atlantis Press*, 416-421.
- Joesyiana, K. (2018). Pengaruh Word of Mouth Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Konsumen Pada Media Online Shop Shopee di Pekanbaru. *Jurnal Valuta*, 71-85.
- Johnson, C. (2019). *The Art and Science of Personal Branding*. New York: Lorena Jones Book.
- Lim, X. J., Radzol, A. M., Cheah, J., & Wong, M. W. (2017). The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. *Asian journal of business research*, 19-36.
- Marketinginasia.com. (2022, Marketinginasia.com). 5 *Taktik Konten Visual Untuk Meningkatkan Keterlibatan Instagram*. Retrieved from <https://marketinginasia.com/id/5-taktik-konten-visual-untuk-meningkatkan-keterlibatan-instagram/>
- Marwick, A. E. (2013). *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. London: Yale University Press.
- McNally, D., & Speak, K. D. (2014). *Be Your Own Brand*. California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, .
- McQuarrie, e. a. (2013). The Megaphone Effect in Social Media: How Ordinary Consumers Become Style Leaders. *GfK Marketing Intelligence Review*.
- Munnukka, J., Uusitalo, O., & Toivonen, H. (2016). Credibility of a peer endorser

- and advertising effectiveness.  
*Journal of Consumer Marketing.*
- Ratna, N. K. (2004). *Teori, metode dan teknik penelitian sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Retberg, J. W. (2018). Self-representation in social media. *SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, 429-443.
- Smith, L. R., & Sanderson, J. (2015). I'm going to Instagram it! An analysis of athlete self-presentation on Instagram. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 342-358.
- Sudha, M., & Sheena, K. (2017). Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: the Fashion Industr SCMS. *Journal of Indian Management*, 14-30.
- Widodo. (2012). *Cerdik menyusun proposal penelitian skripsi, tesis, dan disertasi: praktis dan dilengkapi contoh*. Jakarta: Magna Script Publishing.
- Winoto, Y. (2015). Penerapan teori kredibilitas sumber (source of credibity) dalam penelitian-penelitian layanan perpustakaan. *Edulib*, 5 (2).
- .