

## **The Influence of Implicit Advertising D'Alba Spray Serum's Implicit Based Soft Selling Strategy on Generation Z's Interest in Buying Skincare Products in Padang City**

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### **Abstract**

The development of social media has changed the pattern of marketing communication, one of which is through a soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising that displays products subtly as part of the audience's content, lifestyle, and daily experience. This study aims to analyze the influence of soft selling strategies based on implicit advertising d'Alba Spray Serum on the buying interest of Generation Z in Padang City, with lifestyle and brand image as mediating variables. This study uses an associative quantitative approach with a sample of 174 Generation Z respondents in Padang City who were selected through purposive sampling techniques, namely respondents who actively use social media and have been exposed to soft selling content of d'Alba products but have never made a purchase transaction. Data was collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the help of SmartPLS software. The results of the study show that the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising has a positive and significant effect on buying interest, lifestyle, and brand image. Lifestyle and brand image have also been proven to have a positive and significant effect on buying interest, and significantly mediate the influence of implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies on buying interest. These findings confirm the importance of an implicit marketing communication approach in building lifestyle perceptions and brand image to drive buying interest in Generation Z.

**Keywords:** *soft selling; implicit advertising; lifestyle; brand image; buying interest.*

### **Abstract**

The development of social media has transformed marketing communication, particularly through soft selling strategies based on implicit advertising that present products subtly as part of content, lifestyle, and everyday experience. This study aims to examine the effect of the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising of d'Alba Spray Serum on Generation Z's purchase intention in Padang City, with lifestyle and brand image as mediating variables. This research applies a quantitative associative approach with a sample of 174 Generation Z respondents in Padang City selected through purposive sampling, namely respondents who actively use social media and have been exposed to d'Alba's soft selling content but have never

The Influence of Implicit Advertising D'Alba Spray Serum's Implicit Based....

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purchased the product. Data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The results show that the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, lifestyle, and brand image. Lifestyle and brand image also have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, and significantly mediate the effect of the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising on purchase intention. These findings confirm the importance of implicit marketing communication in shaping lifestyle perception and brand image to drive Generation Z's purchase intention.

**Keywords:** *soft selling; implicit advertising; lifestyle; brand image; purchase intention.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has changed the way companies advertise as well as the way consumers, especially younger generations, receive and respond to marketing messages. Advertising content not only shapes customer perception, but also influences buying interest through information that is both implicit and explicit (Sun et al., 2025). In the age of social media, consumers no longer receive advertising conventionally; A more subtle and less ad-like communication strategy emerged, known as soft selling. This approach displays the product implicitly without explaining the features directly, by inserting promotional messages into content, activities, and lifestyles, making it easier to be emotionally accepted by generation Z. Soft selling is a storytelling-style sales technique that does not appear to be selling but still aims to offer the product (Faizaty & Laili, 2021).

Several previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of soft selling strategies on the behavior of Generation Z. TikTok as a popular platform among the younger generation provides a great opportunity for brands to utilize soft selling content in their marketing strategies (Virgiananda, 2024). Kurniawati (2022) found that soft selling had a significant effect on buying interest in Base skincare products, while Sun et al. (2025) showed that consumers responded more positively to experiential strategies than direct promotional communication. Chen and Smith (2025) also found that sponsored content designs that are presented organically and not very persuasively have a significant influence on audience engagement. However, these studies generally focus on content design and engagement levels, and have not quantitatively tested the influence of soft selling based on implicit advertising on the purchase interest of skincare products, especially through lifestyle and brand image mediation mechanisms in the context of Generation Z in Padang City.

This phenomenon is supported by Indonesia's digital conditions which are very conducive to implicit marketing strategies. Indonesia's population at the beginning of 2025 is recorded at around 285 million people, with 212 million people (74.6%) of whom are active internet users and 143 million people (50.2%) are recorded as social media users, where Instagram and

TikTok are the two most superior platforms as visual spaces for lifestyle trends and product marketing. Especially in West Sumatra Province, Padang City is recorded as the area with the largest internet user base among other districts/cities, with the majority of the population accessing the internet for social media (78.63%), entertainment (78.04%), and information search (77.94%) (Editorial, 2022). In the beauty industry, the ZAP Beauty Index (2024) survey shows that 76.4% of Indonesian women search for information on beauty products through Instagram, while the Populix survey noted that 65% of respondents are inspired by facial care trends from social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, far surpassing other sources of information such as marketplace reviews and friend recommendations.

D'Alba, a premium beauty brand from South Korea, is a relevant research object because its flagship product, White Truffle First Spray Serum, has sold more than 50 million bottles globally and earned an average rating of 4.5 from more than 1.1 million transactions on TikTok Shop. This success is inseparable from content-based promotion strategies on social media, both through official accounts and other users' content, which display products implicitly as part of the lifestyle without explicitly reviewing the product's features. The behavior of Gen Z digital consumers also shows changes that support the relevance of this strategy: a local survey shows that 68% of Gen Z respondents in Padang City are more interested in ads that build a lifestyle than explaining product features directly, in line with the high penetration of TikTok (85%) and Instagram (72%) among the young generation of Padang City.

Although previous research has proven that implicit communication approaches can increase audience engagement and positive responses, the relationship between implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies and buying interest, particularly those mediated in parallel by lifestyle and brand image, has not been quantitatively tested. The novelty of this study lies in the position of the implicit advertising-based soft selling strategy as the main variable measured using the implicitness dimension of the Soft Sell Appeal construct (Okazaki et al., 2010), as well as the focus on Generation Z who empirically tend to avoid hard selling but are more responsive to disguised communication. Without adequate empirical evidence, businesses run the risk of implementing implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies based only on trends, not on valid test results.

### **Buying Interest**

Buying interest is a central concept in the study of consumer behavior that refers to an individual's tendency to make a purchase in the future as a result of an evaluation of perceived attitudes, social norms, and behavioral controls. According to Abdul et al. (2022), buying interest is the feeling to buy that arises after consumers carry out pre-purchase activities. Buying interest is not the final purchase decision, but rather a strong predictor of actual purchasing behavior influenced by marketing stimuli such as advertising and brand image. This variable is measured through six indicators adapted from Kotler and Keller (2021) in Wardhana (2024), namely awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase intention.

### **Implicit Advertising-Based Soft Selling Strategy**

Soft selling advertising is the implicit delivery of a product through a subtle marketing strategy, without an aggressive approach or explicit explanation of the product's features, but

rather by building an emotional association through repeated visual exposure. Kotler and Keller (2016) explain that soft selling advertising involves stimulating product information through storylines and subtle education that reduces consumer resistance. Implicit communication in advertising does not simply convey product information, but subtly influences the audience's emotions, values, and social identity through cultural symbols strategically (Liu, 2025). This study adapts the implicitness dimension of the Soft Sell Appeal construct (Okazaki et al., 2010) with four indicators, namely insinuation (conveying a message through gestures), appealing (conveying an interesting message without direct promotion), subjective (interpretive message), and expressive (expressive delivery).

### **Lifestyle**

Lifestyle can be interpreted as the characteristics, specificities, and ways of life of a certain society (Surbakti et al., 2022). Mowen and Minor, as cited in Surbakti et al. (2022), define lifestyle as an individual's lifestyle that includes activities, interests, and expenses that shape consumption preferences. Generation Z who are exposed to lifestyle-oriented ads tend to associate products with social prestige, thereby increasing emotional buying interest; Research by Basmantra et al. (2022) even shows that lifestyle contributes 25.7% to the variation in Gen Z's purchasing behavior through social media platforms. The lifestyle variables in this study were measured using the AIO (Activities, Interest, Opinions) approach adapted from Chaihanchai and Anantachart (2023).

### **Brand Image**

Brand image is a unique set of perceptions and associations attached to a brand in consumers' memory, which influences attitudes and purchase intentions through the process of associative memory (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Implicitly displayed brand imagery has proven to be effective in shaping long-term loyalty as young consumers associate brands with their social identity; Virgiananda (2024) found that soft selling content on TikTok had a significant effect on brand advocacy intention with a contribution of 64.4%. This study measures brand image using four indicators from Dam and Dam (2021), namely reliable, attractive, pleasing, and has a good reputation.

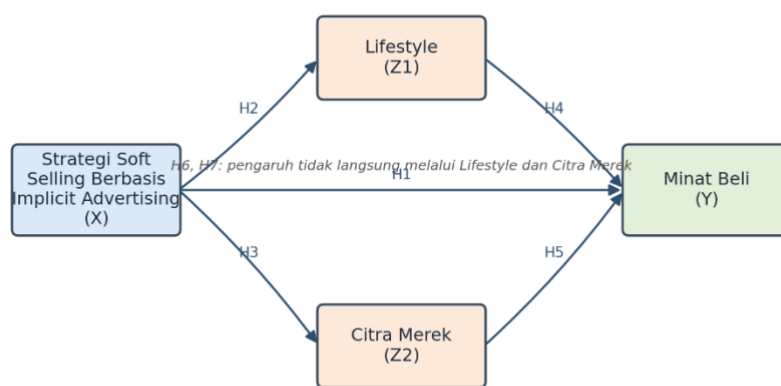
### **Relationship Between Variables and Hypothesis Development**

The implicit presentation of promotional messages creates exposure that does not feel forced so that Generation Z tends to form a more positive perception of the brand and ultimately fosters buying interest. Kurniawati (2022), Sadewo et al. (2025), Sardia (2024), Simamora and Suryani (2025), and Valencia et al. (2025) consistently found that soft selling strategies have a positive and significant effect on buying interest. In addition to having a direct impact on buying interest, soft selling based on implicit advertising also conveys messages subtly through cultural symbols, emotions, and narratives that represent certain lifestyles (Liu, 2025); These findings are supported by Rahma and Walisyah (2026), Ramadani and Wibowo (2026), Asrita and Rhizky (2020), Nurhidayat and Jati (2026), and Hermawan (2020) which show that soft selling is able to shape and support audience lifestyles.

In addition to lifestyle, implicit communication that does not make the audience feel strongly persuaded has the potential to form a trustworthy brand image. Fuad et al. (2026), Ervania and

Suranto (2022), Aminullah and Kristiyono (2021), Natania et al. (2023), and Putri and Intenilia (2025) found that soft selling strategies can be used to build and maintain brand image through more convenient, educational, and authentic communication for consumers. On the other hand, the lifestyle represented in the content forms self-congruity in which young consumers associate products with their self-image ideals, thereby encouraging aspirational purchase intent (Basmantra et al., 2022); this is also confirmed by D. N. Rahma et al. (2025), Magfirah and Aprianti (2023), Widiyanti et al. (2025), Puspita et al. (2026), and Hadi H. et al. (2023). Similarly, implicit brand image strengthens consumers' perceptions of prestige and trust through brand equity, as found by Sadewo et al. (2025), Purwati and Cahyanti (2022), Kuswibowo and Murti (2021), Amelia et al. (2023), and Wardani and Istiyanto (2022).

Previous research has also indicated that lifestyle and brand image can play a role as a mechanism that explains the relationship between digital marketing activities and buying interest. Sari et al. (2024) and Manikasanti and Suardana (2024) found that lifestyle affects the interest in buying skincare products in TikTok users, while Monesa and Simanjuntak (2024) show that the implicit dimension in soft-sell advertising forms a positive attitude towards advertising which then encourages buying interest. In the brand image path, Suardita and Santika (2026) and Dewi et al. (2024) found that brand image significantly mediates the influence of digital marketing activities on purchase intention, and Suwandi et al. (2023) strengthen the role of brand image in explaining the influence of TikTok marketing on buying interest in skincare products. Based on this description, the conceptual framework of this study was prepared based on the Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961, in Rehman et al., 2014) which explains that soft selling advertising based on implicit advertising works through the stage of affection (lifestyle and brand image) to reach the conquest stage (buying interest), as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework**

Based on this conceptual framework, this study formulates seven hypotheses as follows: H1: Implicit advertising d'Alba Spray Serum's implicit advertising soft selling strategy has a positive and significant effect on the buying interest of generation Z in Padang City. H2: Implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies have a positive and significant effect on lifestyle. H3: Implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies have a positive and significant

effect on brand image. H4: Lifestyle has a positive and significant effect on the buying interest of Generation Z in Padang City. H5: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on the buying interest of Generation Z in Padang City. H6: Lifestyle mediates the influence of implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies on the buying interest of Generation Z in Padang City. H7: Brand image mediates the influence of implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies on the buying interest of Generation Z in Padang City.

This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of marketing management science, especially in the study of implicit marketing communication strategies, as well as practical contributions for business actors and digital marketing practitioners in designing soft-selling-based promotion strategies that are more effective, contextual, and in accordance with the characteristics of Generation Z.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a type of quantitative research with an associative approach. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research is based on the philosophy of positivism which views that reality can be classified, relatively fixed, concrete, observed, measurable, and causal. This method is used to test hypotheses that have been established through data collection with research instruments and quantitative statistical data analysis. The research was carried out in the Padang City area, West Sumatra, with the main focus on Generation Z who are active in using social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

The population of this study is all generation Z in Padang City. Given the limitations of time, cost, and accessibility, this study uses a sample selected through purposive sampling techniques, namely Generation Z respondents (birth range 1997–2012) in Padang City who are active in using social media, have been exposed to soft selling content of d'Alba skincare products, and have never made a purchase transaction for the product. Referring to Hair et al. (2018) in Harijanto et al. (2023), the number of representative samples is calculated based on the number of indicators multiplied by 5 to 10. This study uses 17 indicators, so that the minimum sample number is 85 respondents and the ideal is 170 respondents. Based on these calculations, this study succeeded in collecting 174 respondents who met the criteria, collected through a closed questionnaire during the period of July 12-22, 2026.

The data of this study is primary data obtained directly from respondents through filling out questionnaires. This study involves independent variables, namely the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising (X); dependent variables, namely buying interest (Y); and two mediating variables, namely lifestyle (Z1) and brand image (Z2). The operational definition of each variable is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Variable Operational Definition**

| Variabel            | Definition                                                                                           | Indicator                                                                | Scale  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Buying Interest (Y) | The feeling of buying that arises after consumers carry out pre-purchase activities (Wardhana, 2024) | Awareness; knowledge; liking; preference; conviction; purchase intention | Likert |

| Variabel                                             | Definition                                                                                                                                           | Indicator                                             | Scale  |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Implicit Advertising-Based Soft Selling Strategy (X) | A subtle marketing approach that integrates product marketing implicitly without direct emphasis (Okazaki et al., 2010)                              | Insinuation; appealing; subjective; expressive        | Likert |
| Lifestyle (Z1)                                       | An individual's lifestyle that includes the activities, interests, and opinions that shape consumption preferences (Chaihanchai & Anantachart, 2023) | Activities; interest; opinions                        | Likert |
| Brand Image (Z2)                                     | A unique set of perceptions and associations inherent in brands in consumers' memories (Dam & Dam, 2021)                                             | Reliable; attractive; pleasing; has a good reputation | Likert |

The research instrument used a closed questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, namely strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1), to show respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of each indicator (Bandono, 2022).

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study consisted of descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis provides an empirical picture of the data collected through central measurement and data dissemination (Sugiyono, 2013). The stages include data verification (checking the completeness of answers and the suitability of respondent criteria), calculation of answer scores and averages (mean), as well as calculation of Respondent Achievement Level (TCR) which is grouped into five categories, namely very weak (0%–20%), weak (21%–40%), adequate (41%–60%), strong (61%–80%), and very strong (81%–100%).

Inferential analysis was used to test the relationships between variables and prove the research hypothesis using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS software. According to Hair et al. (2010), PLS-SEM is suitable for descriptive and exploratory research and is effective in testing the relationship between latent constructs and reflective indicators, including models with mediating variables. The evaluation of the outer model includes a convergent validity test (the required outer loading value is above 0.708 and the Average Variance Extracted/AVE is above 0.50), the discriminant validity test (Fornell-Larcker criteria), and the reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability above 0.70) (Hair et al., 2021). The internal model evaluation was carried out by looking at the R-Square value, the path coefficient in the original sample, and significance testing through the bootstrapping technique which produced a t-statistic value above 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05. Testing of the mediation hypothesis was carried out by looking at the value of indirect effects; If the indirect influence is significant, then the mediation variable is declared to be able to bridge the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Overview of Research Objects

D'Alba is a South Korean skincare brand known for its White Truffle First Spray Serum product and its serum variant which is packaged in spray form. This product is marketed as a multifunctional serum that can be used as a moisturizer, skin care, as well as a makeup complement, with the characteristics of light texture and fine mist particles. D'Alba Spray Serum is generally promoted through content that does not directly sell, but rather displays the user experience, the results of use, and aesthetic visual impressions, thus forming an implicit advertising pattern that feels natural and close to the audience's daily life. TikTok is a very relevant medium for this strategy because it has an algorithm-based content distribution system and a very large user base in Indonesia, reaching 180 million users by October 2025, so it is a potential space to reach generation Z.

## Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 174 Generation Z respondents in Padang City who actively use social media TikTok and Instagram, had been exposed to soft selling content of d'Alba skincare products, and had never made a purchase transaction for the product. The characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Respondent Characteristics**

| Category | Groups              | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender   | Male                | 39        | 22,0           |
|          | Women               | 135       | 78,0           |
| Age      | ≤ 19 years old      | 5         | 2,9            |
|          | 20-22 years old     | 117       | 67,2           |
|          | 23-25 years old     | 38        | 21,8           |
|          | ≥ 26 years old      | 13        | 7,5            |
| Jobs     | Student/Student     | 134       | 77,0           |
|          | Entrepreneurship    | 5         | 2,9            |
|          | Civil Servant       | 5         | 2,9            |
|          | Private Employees   | 10        | 5,8            |
|          | Freelance           | 13        | 7,5            |
|          | Not Working / Other | 7         | 4,0            |

| Category          | Groups                      | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Revenue per Month | < IDR 1,000,000             | 92        | 52,9           |
|                   | IDR1,000,000–IDR 4,999,999  | 64        | 36,8           |
|                   | IDR 5,000,000–IDR 9,999,999 | 16        | 9,2            |
|                   | > Rp10.000.000              | 2         | 1,1            |

Based on Table 2, the majority of respondents are female (78.0%), aged 20–22 years (67.2%), students/students (77.0%), with monthly income below IDR 1,000,000 (52.9%). This profile is consistent with the characteristics of the target market of d'Alba skincare products which target young urban consumers who are active on social media.

### Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Descriptive analysis was carried out to determine the tendency of respondents' answers to each research variable using the Respondent Achievement Level (TCR). A summary of the results of the descriptive analysis of the four variables is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Summary of Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables**

| Variabel                                             | Number of Items | Rentang Mean | TCR range (%) | Category             |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Implicit Advertising-Based Soft Selling Strategy (X) | 4               | 3,95 – 4,11  | 79 – 82       | Strong – Very Strong |
| Lifestyle (Z1)                                       | 3               | 3,89 – 4,03  | 78 – 81       | Strong – Very Strong |
| Brand Image (Z2)                                     | 4               | 4,11 – 4,26  | 82 – 85       | Very Powerful        |
| Buying Interest (Y)                                  | 6               | 3,93 – 4,22  | 79 – 84       | Strong – Very Strong |

In general, the four research variables were in the strong to very strong category, with the highest achievement in the brand image variable (82%–85%). This indicates that respondents rated d'Alba's products featured in soft selling content to be of good quality, appeal, and reputation, while perceiving the content as a relevant representation of lifestyle and an implicit, attractive, and unimpressive promotional message as direct advertising.

### Data Analysis (PLS-SEM)

**Convergent Validity Test**

Convergent validity testing is carried out by looking at the outer loading value of each indicator. The results of data processing using SmartPLS showed that all indicators in each variable had an outer loading value above 0.708 as required by Hair et al. (2021), with values ranging from 0.738 to 0.899, as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Summary of Outer Loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

| Variabel                  | Outer Loading Range | AVE   |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Brand Image (CM)          | 0,830 – 0,873       | 0,723 |
| Implicit Advertising (IA) | 0,794 – 0,851       | 0,686 |
| Lifestyle (LS)            | 0,738 – 0,899       | 0,669 |
| Buying Interest (MB)      | 0,740 – 0,836       | 0,622 |

The AVE value of all variables is also above the threshold of 0.50, so that each construct is able to explain more than 50% of the variance of its constituent indicators and is declared to be convergently valid.

**Discriminating Validity Test**

Discriminant validity is tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root value of a construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs.

**Tabel 5. Output Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

|                      | Brand Image | Implicit Advertising | Lifestyle | Buying Interest |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Brand Image          | 0,850       |                      |           |                 |
| Implicit Advertising | 0,775       | 0,828                |           |                 |
| Lifestyle            | 0,789       | 0,746                | 0,818     |                 |
| Buying Interest      | 0,847       | 0,765                | 0,839     | 0,788           |

The square root value of AVE (diagonal elements) in Table 5 is generally higher than the correlation between variables, so that each construct is declared to have adequate discriminant validity even though the constructs show a fairly strong relationship, especially between lifestyle and buying interest.

**Reliability Test**

Tabel 6. Output Cronbach's Alpha dan Composite Reliability

| Variabel             | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability (rho_a) | Composite Reliability (rho_c) | AVE   |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Brand Image          | 0,872            | 0,874                         | 0,913                         | 0,723 |
| Implicit Advertising | 0,848            | 0,852                         | 0,897                         | 0,686 |
| Lifestyle            | 0,749            | 0,769                         | 0,857                         | 0,669 |
| Buying Interest      | 0,878            | 0,881                         | 0,908                         | 0,622 |

All variables have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.60 and Composite Reliability above 0.70, so that the research instrument is declared reliable and consistent in measuring the constructs studied (Hair et al., 2021).

### R-Square

Tabel 7. Output R-Square

| Variable endogenous | R-square | R-square Adjusted | Category |
|---------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| Lifestyle           | 0,557    | 0,554             | Moderate |
| Brand Image         | 0,601    | 0,598             | Moderate |
| Buying Interest     | 0,802    | 0,798             | Strong   |

The R-square adjusted value showed that the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising was able to explain the variation in lifestyle by 55.4% and brand image by 59.8% (moderate category), while the three variables (soft selling strategies based on implicit advertising, lifestyle, and brand image) were simultaneously able to explain the variation in buying interest by 79.8% (strong category).

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was carried out through the bootstrapping technique with the acceptance criteria of T-statistics > 1.96 and P-values < 0.05. The results of the direct influence test are presented in Table 8 and the indirect influence (mediation) in Table 9.

Table 8. Output Path Coefficient (Direct Influence)

| Relationships Between Variables        | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics | P Values | Remarks    |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|------------|
| Implicit Advertising → Buying Interest | 0,135               | 1,996        | 0,046    | Signifikan |

| Relationships Between Variables    | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics | P Values | Remarks    |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|------------|
| Implicit Advertising → Lifestyle   | 0,746               | 13,839       | 0,000    | Signifikan |
| Implicit Advertising → Brand Image | 0,775               | 15,804       | 0,000    | Signifikan |
| Lifestyle → Buying Interest        | 0,405               | 7,522        | 0,000    | Signifikan |
| Brand Image → Buying Interest      | 0,424               | 6,850        | 0,000    | Signifikan |

Table 9. Output Indirect Effect (Pengaruh Tidak Langsung/Mediasi)

| Mediation Relationship                               | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics | P Values | Remarks    |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|------------|
| Implicit Advertising → Lifestyle → Buying Interest   | 0,302               | 6,668        | 0,000    | Signifikan |
| Implicit Advertising → Brand Image → Buying Interest | 0,329               | 6,257        | 0,000    | Signifikan |

The test results in Table 8 and Table 9 show that all seven research hypotheses are accepted, as each relationship has a T-value above 1.96 and a P-value below 0.05.

## Discussion

### *The Effect of Implicit Advertising-Based Soft Selling Strategies on Buying Interest*

The test results showed that the implicit advertising-based soft selling strategy had a positive and significant effect on the buying interest of generation Z in Padang City ( $\beta = 0.135$ ;  $T = 1,996$ ;  $p = 0.046$ ), until H1 is accepted. These findings show that the better the implementation of the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising on social media, the higher the buying interest of Generation Z in d'Alba skincare products. These results are in line with Kurniawati (2022) who found that soft selling has a positive and significant effect on buying interest, and Sadewo et al. (2025) who show that promotional messages that are conveyed subtly or indirectly are able to increase buying interest without giving a compelling impression. These findings are also strengthened by Sardia (2024) and Valencia et al. (2025) who found that soft selling strategies and content consistently have a positive effect on buying interest, and Simamora and Suryani (2025) who emphasized that the soft selling approach creates more persuasive marketing communication than hard selling, especially for consumers who prefer a personal and educational approach.

### *The Influence of Implicit Advertising-Based Soft Selling Strategies on Lifestyle*

Implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies have been proven to have a positive and significant effect on lifestyle ( $\beta = 0.746$ ;  $T = 13,839$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), until H2 is accepted. This relatively large influence value indicates that d'Alba's promotional content that is implicitly packaged is able to strongly shape the perception of Generation Z's lifestyle. This finding is in line with Rahma and Walisyah (2026) who found that the delivery of messages through lifestyle representations and daily narratives makes products seen as part of the lifestyle that consumers want to achieve, and Ramadani and Wibowo (2026) who show that soft selling-style advertising is able to build the lifestyle of Generation Z through narratives that are relevant to the audience. These results are also consistent with Asrita and Rhizky (2020), Nurhidayat and Jati (2026), and Hermawan (2020) who found that the insertion of products into stories or activities of public figures can shape the meaning of the audience's lifestyle without direct promotional delivery.

### *The Influence of Implicit Advertising-Based Soft Selling Strategies on Brand Image*

Implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies also have a positive and significant effect on brand image ( $\beta = 0.775$ ;  $T = 15,804$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), so H3 is accepted, and is the strongest direct influence pathway in this research model. These findings are in line with Fuad et al. (2026) who found that soft selling communication that feels more comfortable for consumers can form a more positive, meaningful, and trusted perception of the brand, as well as Ervania and Suranto (2022) who show that the delivery of information and education that is relevant to the audience helps build brand perception. These results are also consistent with Aminullah and Kristiyono (2021), Natania et al. (2023), and Putri and Intentilia (2025) who found that soft selling approaches through storytelling and interactive content are effective in maintaining and building brand image without overly direct promotion.

### *The Influence of Lifestyle on Buying Interest*

Lifestyle has a positive and significant effect on buying interest ( $\beta = 0.405$ ;  $T = 7.522$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), until H4 is accepted. These results indicate that the more lifestyle the content portrayed in the content with the values, activities, and preferences of Generation Z, the higher their buying interest in d'Alba skincare products. These findings are in line with D. N. Rahma et al. (2025) who found that students' lifestyles play an important role in shaping the tendency to buy cosmetic products, and Magfirah and Aprianti (2023) who showed that consumer activities, interests, and opinions influence consumption patterns in choosing skincare products. These results are also strengthened by Widiyanti et al. (2025), Puspita et al. (2026), and Hadi H. et al. (2023) who consistently found a positive influence of lifestyle on buying interest in various product categories.

### *The Influence of Brand Image on Buying Interest*

Brand image has a positive and significant effect on buying interest ( $\beta = 0.424$ ;  $T = 6,850$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), until H5 is accepted. These findings show that a strong, authentic, and consistent brand image is able to build consumer trust so as to encourage buying interest in d'Alba skincare products. These results are in line with Sadewo et al. (2025) and Purwati and Cahyanti (2022) who found that a positive brand image increases consumer buying interest, as well as Kuswibowo and Murti (2021) and Amelia et al. (2023) who show that a good brand image builds trust and satisfaction that drives purchasing decisions. Wardani and Istiyanto (2022)

also emphasized that the easier a brand is remembered and the more positive the impression formed in society, the higher the consumer buying interest.

### *The Role of Lifestyle Mediation and Brand Image*

The results of the indirect effect test showed that lifestyle mediated the influence of implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies on buying interest positively and significantly ( $\beta = 0.302$ ;  $T = 6.668$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), until H6 is accepted. Similarly, brand image mediated the influence of implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies on buying interest positively and significantly ( $\beta = 0.329$ ;  $T = 6.257$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), until H7 is accepted. These two findings confirm that implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies not only affect buying interest directly, but also indirectly through the formation of lifestyle perceptions and brand image. These results are in line with Monesa and Simanjuntak (2024) who show that the implicit dimension in soft-sell advertising forms a positive attitude towards advertising before finally driving buying interest, as well as with Suardita and Santika (2026) and Dewi et al. (2024) who found that brand image significantly mediates the influence of digital marketing activities on purchase intent. These findings are also reinforced by Chen and Smith (2025) who show that an implicit soft selling approach that presents products as a natural part of the public figure's lifestyle is the most effective strategy in increasing audience engagement. Overall, these results confirm that lifestyle and brand image act as psychological mechanisms that bridge implicit promotional messages with Generation Z's consumers' decision to consider purchasing d'Alba skincare products.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion of seven research hypotheses regarding the influence of the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising d'Alba Spray Serum on the buying interest of generation Z in Padang City, it can be concluded that all hypotheses are accepted. Implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies have a positive and significant effect both on direct buying interest, as well as on lifestyle and brand image. Lifestyle and brand image have also been proven to have a positive and significant effect on buying interest, and significantly mediate the influence of implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies on buying interest. In other words, the better the implementation of the soft selling strategy based on implicit advertising on social media, the higher the perception of lifestyle, brand image, and ultimately the buying interest of Generation Z in d'Alba skincare products, both through direct channels and through lifestyle mediation mechanisms and brand image.

These findings provide a number of practical implications. For companies, it is recommended to prioritize implicit advertising-based soft selling strategies on social media channels such as Instagram and TikTok, considering that the biggest influence path in this study was found in the relationship between these strategies and brand image ( $\beta = 0.775$ ), for example through collaboration with social media influencers who have image compatibility with the brand so that product delivery feels more authentic. For digital marketing practitioners, it is recommended to develop soft selling content based on implicit advertising that is able to represent the lifestyle of the target consumer while strengthening the brand image through the delivery of natural and relevant messages, considering that these two variables have proven to be significant mediators in encouraging buying interest.

This study has limitations, including the coverage of respondents who are limited to generation Z in Padang City and the object of research that only focuses on one skincare brand. Therefore, for academics and researchers, it is recommended to test this model on other product categories, such as food and beverage (FnB), add other relevant variables such as brand trust, influencer credibility, or customer engagement, and consider a mixed methods approach to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanism of influence of soft selling strategies based on implicit advertising on consumer buying interest. For Generation Z consumers, it is recommended to be wiser in responding to content marketing by critically evaluating the suitability of product needs and benefits, not solely based on the virality of the content, for the sake of rational purchasing decisions.

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