

BEYOND BRAND ATTITUDE: DIRECT INFLUENCER EFFECTS
ON TIKTOK SKINCARE PURCHASE INTENTION

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Corresponding Author: Wisnu Mahendri, Universitas KH. A. Wahab Hasbullah, Email: wisnumahendri@gmail.com Keywords: Authenticity; Brand Attitude; Credibility;	This research examines how influencer credibility and authenticity affect consumer purchase intentions for skincare products on TikTok. Using PLS-SEM analysis of Indonesian TikTok users, the study tests whether brand attitude mediates these relationships. Results show that both credibility and authenticity significantly and directly influence purchase intentions with comparable effects. Surprisingly, brand attitude shows negligible effects on purchase intention and does not mediate the proposed relationships. The findings are remarkable because they contradict traditional persuasion theories that emphasize attitude-mediated pathways. Instead, the results suggest that TikTok influencer marketing operates through direct source-centric mechanisms rather than elaborated attitude formation. Influencer characteristics emerge as primary drivers of purchase decisions in the social media skincare context. These insights have important implications for marketing strategy and contribute to understanding consumer decision-making in digital environments. The study provides actionable guidance for brand managers seeking to optimize influencer partnerships and for influencers aiming to enhance their persuasive impact.
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Introduction

The rapid expansion of TikTok as a social commerce platform has significantly altered digital marketing strategies, particularly within the beauty and skincare industry. With over 1 billion monthly active users worldwide and a substantial market share among Generation Z consumers, TikTok now serves as a vital channel for skincare brands seeking to influence purchasing decisions (Chavare dkk., 2024). In Indonesia, TikTok's penetration rate has reached approximately 70% of the internet user population, establishing it as an essential platform for engaging younger consumers in the skincare sector. In this environment, influencer marketing has become a prominent strategy. Recent data indicate that 65% of consumers made at least one purchase influenced by an endorsement in 2026, with skincare products ranking among the most responsive categories to influencer marketing (Department, 2026).

Extant research demonstrates that influencer credibility, defined by expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, exerts a significant influence on consumer purchase intentions (Saini, 2024). Likewise, influencer authenticity marked by transparency and genuine recommendations has been found to enhance consumer trust and promote favorable brand evaluations (Yudiawati & Ariyanti, 2022). Numerous studies corroborate the positive direct effects of both credibility and authenticity on purchase behavior (Azzahra & Roslina, 2025; KEMEÇ & YÜKSEL, 2021). Nevertheless, most of these investigations employ a direct-effect model, conceptualizing purchase intention as an immediate

outcome of influencer characteristics, while neglecting the psychological mechanisms that mediate the translation of these perceptions into actual purchasing decisions.

A notable gap in the literature is the lack of comprehensive models elucidating the mechanisms by which influencer credibility and authenticity affect purchase intention. Recent theoretical developments propose that brand attitude serves as a key intermediary, acting as the cognitive-affective channel through which consumers' perceptions of influencers are transferred to brand evaluations and subsequent purchasing behaviors (Chavare dkk., 2024). Empirical findings from (Kerkri dkk., 2025) reveal a near-complete transfer of positive attitudes from influencers to brands, with path coefficients nearing 0.90, suggesting that attitudes toward influencers can significantly shape brand perceptions. Additionally, studies by (Immanue & S., 2021; Magano dkk., 2022) indicate that brand attitude operates as a significant partial mediator in influencer marketing, attenuating the direct effects of influencer characteristics while establishing substantive indirect pathways to purchase intention.

Despite these advances, no prior study has specifically examined how brand attitude mediates the influence of both credibility and authenticity on purchase intention within the Indonesian skincare market on TikTok. The Indonesian context is particularly important because consumers in this market show distinct preferences for products that combine credibility with perceived authenticity, and the skincare category is exceptionally sensitive to influencer recommendations. By investigating brand attitude as an intervening variable, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying influencer marketing effectiveness. This theoretical contribution is complemented by practical insights for skincare brands and influencer strategists operating in Southeast Asia's largest e-commerce market.

The present study employs Source Credibility Theory (Ohanian, 1990), grounded in the principle that message effectiveness depends on the source's credibility, to explain how influencer characteristics influence brand evaluations. Additionally, it integrates the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) to account for the cognitive pathways through which consumers process influencer-generated content and form brand attitudes. These theoretical frameworks provide a robust foundation for explaining why credibility and authenticity matter for building brand attitude and, subsequently, for predicting purchase intentions. The theoretical model proposes that credibility and authenticity operate through two primary pathways: a direct effect on purchase intention and an indirect effect mediated by brand attitude, offering a more comprehensive explanation than single-pathway models.

This research addresses the following specific objectives: (1) to examine the direct influence of influencer credibility on brand attitude toward Skintific products; (2) to examine the direct influence of influencer authenticity on brand attitude toward Skintific products; (3) to determine the extent to which brand attitude mediates the relationships between both influencer dimensions and purchase intention; and (4) to provide actionable insights for influencer selection and content strategy in the Indonesian skincare market. The significance of this study lies in its ability to advance both theoretical

understanding and practical application in influencer marketing, particularly for a rapidly growing market segment underrepresented in international marketing literature.

The integrated model presented in this research combines two complementary theoretical perspectives. First, following the Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Relationship Theory frameworks, influencer credibility and authenticity are posited to influence brand attitude formation through cognitive and affective mechanisms (H1, H2). Second, drawing from Attitude Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior, brand attitude is hypothesized to directly predict purchase intention (H3). However, recognizing the distinctive characteristics of social media marketing contexts, the model additionally proposes that influencer characteristics exert substantial direct effects on purchase intention (H4, H5) through heuristic processing and source-centric persuasion mechanisms that operate independently of explicit brand attitude formation. Finally, the research tests the partial mediation hypothesis (H6, H7), acknowledging that while credibility and authenticity may activate immediate behavioral inclinations, they may also influence purchase intention through more elaborated cognitive-affective brand evaluation pathways. This seven-hypothesis framework provides a comprehensive testing of both indirect (attitude-mediated) and direct (source-activated) influence mechanisms in the TikTok skincare marketing context, contributing to more nuanced understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness in contemporary digital environments.

Research Method

This research employs a quantitative, causal-associative approach to examine the direct and indirect effects of influencer credibility and authenticity on purchase intention, with brand attitude as an intervening variable. The causal-associative research design is selected to investigate causal relationships among multiple variables within a structured theoretical framework, enabling the assessment of both direct and mediated pathways in consumer decision-making. Data collection was conducted through self-administered questionnaires distributed to respondents who met specific inclusion criteria.

The population for this study comprises TikTok users aged 13–40 years who have viewed influencer-generated content promoting Skintific products on the TikTok platform. Specific inclusion criteria for population members include: (1) active TikTok users with a minimum usage duration of six months; (2) documented exposure to content from designated influencers (specifically Tasya Farasya, Rachel Vennya, or Alyssa Daguise) promoting Skintific products; (3) geographic location within Indonesia; and (4) willingness and capacity to complete research instruments. The population size is not definitively known due to the dynamic nature of social media platform demographics (Mahbubi, 2025). The sample for this research comprises 120 TikTok users meeting the specified criteria. This sample size was determined according to the guidelines provided by Malhotra (2009) and validated through Hair et al. (2021) recommendations for structural equation modeling, which stipulate that sample size should be determined by multiplying the total number of indicators by 5–10. Since this research includes 12 measurement indicators across all variables (4 indicators for credibility, 4 for authenticity, 4 for brand

attitude, and 4 for purchase intention), the calculation yields $12 \times 10 = 120$ respondents. This sample size provides adequate statistical power for model estimation and hypothesis testing in PLS-SEM analysis.

Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to select respondents. This sampling approach was selected to ensure that respondents met specific inclusion criteria essential for the research objectives: (1) active TikTok users who regularly access beauty and skincare content; (2) documented exposure to Skintific promotional content from designated influencers; (3) willingness to participate in the research and complete questionnaire instruments; and (4) age between 13 and 40 years, representing the primary target demographic for TikTok beauty-related content. All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Influencer Credibility is operationalized as the extent to which consumers perceive an influencer as possessing expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, collectively enhancing the influencer's persuasive capacity for endorsed products. Measurement encompasses four dimensions: (1) Trusted reflecting consumers' trust in the information provided by the influencer about Skintific products; (2) Communicable assessing the influencer's ability to explain product benefits in an understandable manner; (3) Expertise measuring consumers' perception of the influencer's extensive knowledge about skincare products; and (4) Attractiveness evaluating the attractiveness of the influencer's speaking style.

Influencer Authenticity is defined as the degree to which consumers perceive an influencer as genuinely honest, reliable, warm, and sincerely motivated to recommend products, characterized by transparency and consistency between expressed opinions and actual behaviors. This construct comprises four dimensions: (1) Honest measuring influencer transparency regarding product strengths; (2) Reliable assessing consistency in providing accurate product information; (3) Perceived Warmth evaluating authenticity during product reviews; and (4) Intention to Recommend measuring the influencer's genuine desire to recommend Skintific products (Mahbubi, 2025).

Brand Attitude, refers to the consumer's overall evaluative judgment about the Skintific brand, encompassing both cognitive assessments of brand attributes and affective emotional responses toward the brand. This construct is operationalized according to (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Spears & Singh, 2004) conceptualizations and comprises four dimensions: (1) Positive Feeling Toward Brand measuring positive emotional responses toward Skintific; (2) Perception of Brand Quality assessing perception of Skintific's high quality; (3) Overall Brand Evaluation evaluating overall favorable impressions of Skintific; and (4) Brand Preference measuring preference for Skintific compared to competing skincare brands.

Purchase Intention is operationalized as the consumer's tendency to purchase Skintific products following exposure to influencer-generated TikTok content. This construct reflects the motivational force underlying purchase behavior and comprises four dimensions derived from (Muhammad, 2014): (1) Attention measuring the consumer's focus on influencer discussions of Skintific products; (2) Interest assessing interest in learning more about Skintific products following influencer

reviews; (3) Desire measuring the consumer's desire to own Skintific products after viewing influencer reviews; and (4) Action evaluating purchase planning after viewing influencer reviews.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was selected as the primary data analysis technique. The initial analytical phase focuses on evaluating the measurement model to ensure construct validity and reliability before examining structural relationships. Validity Assessment encompasses multiple dimensions: Convergent Validity is assessed through examination of factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). Specifically, all items must demonstrate factor loadings ≥ 0.70 , indicating that each indicator adequately represents its intended construct. Each construct must achieve an AVE ≥ 0.50 , indicating that at least 50% of its variance is captured by its indicators. Composite reliability must exceed 0.70 for each construct, ensuring internal consistency of measurement. Discriminant Validity is evaluated through one complementary approach: the HTMT criterion, which stipulates that the square root of AVE for each construct must exceed correlations between that construct. Following confirmation of the measurement model's validity, the structural relationships connecting the variables are evaluated. Path Coefficient Assessment examines all hypothesized relationships (H1 through H7) using bootstrapping procedures. Significance levels are set at $p < 0.05$ for standard significance. Effect sizes (Cohen's f^2) are reported to contextualize the practical significance of path coefficients, with guidelines for interpretation: small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35). Model Explanatory Power is evaluated through R^2 values (coefficient of determination) for endogenous variables (brand attitude and purchase intention), with interpretation guidelines: substantial explanatory power ($R^2 \geq 0.75$), moderate explanatory power (0.50–0.74), weak explanatory power (0.25–0.49), and negligible explanatory power ($R^2 < 0.25$).

Research Finding

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics and Demographics

No	Features	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Age	15 – 20 years	23	19,2%
		21 – 25 years	88	73,3%
		26 – 30 years	9	7,5%
		Total	120	100%
2	Gender	Man	14	11,7%
		Women	106	88,3%
		Total	120	100%
3	Final Education	Senior High School	87	72,5%
		Undergraduate	33	27,5%
		Total	120	100%
4	TikTok Usage Length	< 3 Months	4	3,3%
		6 Months	1	0,8%
		1 Year	6	5,0%
		> 2 Year	109	90,9%
		Total	120	100%
Source: Processed data. 2025				

Data collection was conducted among 120 TikTok users who met the research inclusion criteria. The respondents' demographic characteristics reveal important patterns regarding the consumer base for Skintific products on TikTok. In terms of age distribution, the

majority of respondents (73.3%, n=88) were aged 21–25 years, representing early-adult consumers who are highly active on social media. A secondary segment comprised respondents aged 15–20 years (19.2%, n=23), while only a smaller proportion (7.5%, n=9) were aged 26–30 years. This age distribution demonstrates that the primary consumers of Skintific products via TikTok influencer endorsements are concentrated among young adults in early careers or college-age individuals, who represent the digital-native generation with high internet connectivity and predisposition toward influencer-driven consumer behavior

Regarding gender composition, the sample was heavily skewed toward female respondents (88.3%, n=106), with male respondents accounting for only 11.7% (n=14). This gender imbalance reflects the inherent market characteristics of the skincare industry, in which female consumers engage more with skincare products and are proportionally more influenced by influencer recommendations. The predominance of female respondents aligns with documented market trends indicating that beauty and skincare product categories attract disproportionately higher female participation, particularly within younger demographic cohorts

Educational background analysis reveals that the majority of respondents (72.5%, n=87) possessed secondary education (SMA/equivalent level), while 27.5% (n=33) had completed bachelor's degree-level education. This distribution suggests that the primary consumer base comprises individuals with secondary-level education, representing economically accessible consumer segments receptive to mid-premium skincare product offerings.

Notably, TikTok usage duration data shows that 90.9% of respondents (n=109) have been using TikTok for over 2 years, indicating a highly experienced and engaged user base with substantial familiarity with platform dynamics, algorithmic content delivery, and influencer engagement patterns. Only minimal proportions reported shorter usage durations: 5.0% (n=6) for 1 year, 0.8% (n=1) for 6 months, and 3.3% (n=4) for less than 3 months. This pattern of extended platform engagement suggests that respondents possessed sufficient exposure to influencer content and demonstrated established behavioral patterns relevant to influencer-driven purchasing decisions.

In aggregate, the respondent profile indicates that Skintific's primary TikTok-engaged consumer base comprises young adult females (primarily aged 21–25) with secondary-level education and considerable platform experience. This demographic profile is characterized by high digital literacy, susceptibility to influencer marketing messages, and established consumption patterns within beauty and skincare categories. The concentration of experienced female users suggests that TikTok represents a particularly effective channel for

reaching the target market for skincare products, as these respondents demonstrate both the demographic characteristics and platform familiarity necessary for high responsiveness to influencer-driven marketing messages.

Table 2. Outer Model

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Cronbach's α	ρ_{ho_c}	AVE	HTMT
Authenticity	X2.1.1	0.764	0.858	0.904	0.703	Credibility = 0.858; Brand Attitude = 0.447; Purchase Intention = 0.840
	X2.2.1	0.872				
	X2.3.1	0.817				
	X2.4.1	0.894				
Brand Attitude	Z1.1	0.934	0.919	0.943	0.807	Authenticity = 0.447; Credibility = 0.387; Purchase Intention = 0.374
	Z1.2	0.946				
	Z1.3	0.924				
	Z1.4	0.779				
Credibility	X1.1.1	0.824	0.885	0.921	0.744	Authenticity = 0.858; Brand Attitude = 0.387; Purchase Intention = 0.829
	X1.2.1	0.906				
	X1.3.1	0.874				
	X1.4.1	0.843				
Purchase Intention	Y1.1.1	0.868	0.906	0.934	0.780	Authenticity = 0.840; Credibility = 0.829; Brand Attitude = 0.374
	Y1.2.1	0.878				
	Y1.3.1	0.905				
	Y1.4.1	0.881				

Source: Processed data, 2025

The measurement model was comprehensively evaluated prior to structural model testing, ensuring that all constructs demonstrated adequate validity and reliability. Outer Loadings and Convergent Validity: All measurement items demonstrated factor loadings exceeding the 0.70 threshold indicating adequate individual item reliability. Specifically, credibility influencer items ranged from 0.824 to 0.906 across the four dimensions (trusted, communicable, expertise, attractiveness). Authenticity influencer items exhibited loadings ranging from 0.764 to 0.894 across the four dimensions (honesty, reliability, perceived warmth, and intention to recommend). Brand attitude indicators, newly introduced in this extended model, displayed loadings from 0.779 to 0.946, representing the four affective-evaluative dimensions (positive feeling, quality perception, overall evaluation, brand preference). Purchase intention items were most strongly loaded, ranging from 0.868 to 0.905 across four dimensions (attention, interest, desire, action). These consistently high factor loadings indicate that each measurement item reliably captures its intended construct without substantial measurement error.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE): All constructs achieved AVE values substantially exceeding the 0.50 threshold, confirming that the measurement models adequately captured construct variance. Brand attitude demonstrated the highest AVE (0.807), followed by purchase intention (0.780), credibility influencer (0.744), and authenticity influencer (0.703). These AVE values exceed recommendations in extant literature, indicating that the respective

latent variables explain more than 70% of the variance in their observed indicators, substantially surpassing the minimum required threshold.

Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha: All constructs demonstrated CR values exceeding 0.90, with brand attitude achieving the highest reliability (0.943), followed by purchase intention (0.934), credibility influencer (0.921), and authenticity influencer (0.904). Composite reliability values in the 0.90+ range substantially exceed the 0.70 minimum threshold and indicate exceptionally strong internal consistency, indicating that items measuring the same construct are highly intercorrelated and consistently reflect the underlying construct. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha values confirmed these reliability assessments, with all constructs achieving alpha coefficients exceeding 0.85 (ranging from 0.858 to 0.919), indicating excellent internal consistency reliability

Discriminant Validity: The heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) analysis confirmed adequate discriminant validity. All HTMT values remained substantially below the 0.90 threshold recommended in recent PLS-SEM literature. The HTMT matrix showed: credibility influencer with authenticity influencer (HTMT = 0.858), credibility influencer with purchase intention (HTMT = 0.829), authenticity influencer with purchase intention (HTMT = 0.840), brand attitude with authenticity influencer (HTMT = 0.447), credibility influencer with brand attitude (HTMT = 0.387), and purchase intention with brand attitude (HTMT = 0.374). Brand attitude demonstrated notably lower HTMT values with credibility (0.387) and purchase intention (0.374), supporting its conceptual distinction as an intervening mechanism rather than a proxy for independent or dependent variables. The discriminant validity results confirm that the measurement model successfully operationalizes theoretically distinct constructs without substantial cross-contamination.

In summary, comprehensive outer model evaluation confirmed that all four constructs (credibility influencer, authenticity influencer, brand attitude, and purchase intention) demonstrated robust validity and reliability, satisfying all established criteria for measurement model quality. This measurement model quality provides a solid foundation for examining structural relationships and hypothesis testing.

Picture 1. PLS-SEM Structural Model and Measurement

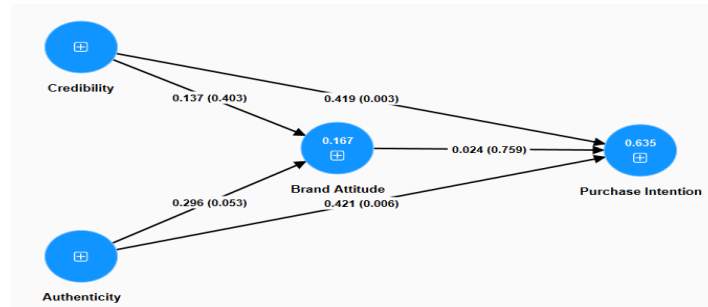


Table 3. R Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand Attitude	0.167	0.153
Purchase Intention	0.635	0.625

Source: Processed data, 2025

The model demonstrates differential explanatory power across endogenous variables. Brand Attitude exhibits a weak coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.167$), indicating that influencer credibility and authenticity explain only a limited proportion of brand attitude variance, with 83.3% of brand evaluations determined by factors beyond the scope of this model. Conversely, Purchase Intention demonstrates moderate explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.635$), suggesting that influencer characteristics and brand attitude collectively capture a moderate portion of consumer purchase behavior variance in the TikTok skincare context. However, the substantial unexplained variance of 36.5% indicates that additional factors not included in this model also influence purchase decisions. The moderate R^2 differential between the two endogenous variables with Purchase Intention exhibiting 3.8 times greater explained variance than Brand Attitude provides empirical support for the primacy of direct influencer effects. These results suggest that influencer marketing in digital contexts operates primarily through direct source-activation mechanisms rather than through elaborated brand attitude formation, though the moderate level of Purchase Intention explanation indicates that other unmeasured variables also play meaningful roles in consumer decision-making.

Table 4. F Square

	f-square
Authenticity -> Brand Attitude	0.046
Authenticity -> Purchase Intention	0.202
Brand Attitude -> Purchase Intention	0.001
Credibility -> Brand Attitude	0.010
Credibility -> Purchase Intention	0.207

Source: Processed data, 2025

Effect size analysis (F^2) reveals substantially divergent patterns of influence across predictor-outcome relationships. Credibility ($F^2 = 0.207$) and Authenticity ($F^2 = 0.202$) exert medium-sized direct effects on Purchase Intention, indicating substantial practical significance. These findings underscore the primacy of direct influence mechanisms in driving consumer purchase decisions. In stark contrast, the indirect pathways through Brand Attitude demonstrate negligible effect sizes. Credibility's influence on Brand Attitude is negligible ($F^2 = 0.010$), while Authenticity's effect is small ($F^2 = 0.046$). Most critically, Brand Attitude's influence on Purchase Intention is negligible ($F^2 = 0.001$), approaching zero practical significance. The substantial disparity in effect sizes between direct paths ($F^2 \approx 0.20$) and indirect paths ($F^2 \leq 0.05$, culminating in $F^2 = 0.001$) provides robust evidence that influencer

marketing in the TikTok context operates predominantly through direct source-activation mechanisms rather than through elaborated brand attitude mediation. These results fundamentally challenge attitude-mediation theories and suggest heuristic processing dominates consumer decision-making in social media skincare marketing.

Table 5. Hypotesis Test

	Original sample	T statistics	P values
Authenticity -> Brand Attitude	0.296	1.938	0.053
Authenticity -> Purchase Intention	0.421	2.727	0.006
Brand Attitude -> Purchase Intention	0.024	0.306	0.759
Credibility -> Brand Attitude	0.137	0.837	0.403
Credibility -> Purchase Intention	0.419	2.958	0.003
Authenticity -> Brand Attitude -> Purchase Intention	0.007	0.254	0.799
Credibility -> Brand Attitude -> Purchase Intention	0.003	0.199	0.842

Source: Processed data, 2025

H1: Credibility Influencer on Brand Attitude was evaluated with a path coefficient of 0.137 (T-statistic = 0.837, $p = 0.403$). The test statistic did not achieve statistical significance at the conventional 0.05 level. This result indicates that influencer credibility does not significantly predict brand attitude in the specified model. Despite theoretically grounded expectations derived from Source Credibility Theory—which posits that sources with higher expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness generate more favorable attitudes—the empirical data do not support a direct significant relationship. The effect size for this path was negligible ($f^2 = 0.010$), indicating that credibility explains less than 1% of the variance in brand attitude when authenticity is also considered. H1 is not supported.

The failure to support H1 suggests that, in the context of TikTok skincare products, perceiving influencers as credible (i.e., possessing expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) does not substantially enhance overall brand attitudes toward Skintific products. This finding implies that credibility may operate through alternative mechanisms, possibly directly influencing purchase intentions through peripheral route processing rather than through elaborated brand attitude formation.

H2: Authenticity Influencer on Brand Attitude yielded a path coefficient of 0.296 (T-statistic = 1.938, $p = 0.053$). This relationship failed to achieve statistical significance at the conventional $p < 0.05$ threshold. Although the p-value approached the significance level ($p = 0.053$), it remains above the standard alpha level and therefore cannot be considered statistically significant. Consequently, H2 is not supported.

The non-significant result indicates that perceived authenticity of influencers does not exert a statistically meaningful effect on brand attitude in this context. The small effect size ($f^2 = 0.046$) further corroborates the negligible practical significance of this relationship, with authenticity explaining only approximately 4.6% of brand attitude variance. This marginal effect size demonstrates that even the observed positive path coefficient (0.296) lacks sufficient substantive magnitude to constitute a meaningful predictor of brand attitude formation.

H3: Brand Attitude on Purchase Intention showed a path coefficient of 0.024 (T-statistic = 0.306, $p = 0.759$). This relationship was not statistically significant, representing a surprising finding given the theoretical primacy of brand attitudes in predicting purchase intentions within the Theory of Planned Behavior framework. The effect size was negligible ($f^2 = 0.001$), indicating that brand attitude explains virtually no variance in purchase intention when simultaneously controlling for direct effects of credibility and authenticity. H3 is not supported.

This unexpected result suggests that in this particular context, brand attitudes do not function as a strong proximal predictor of purchase intention when influencer characteristics are present. Rather, influencer characteristics appear to exert direct persuasive effects on purchase intentions, bypassing explicit attitude formation as an intermediary mechanism. This pattern suggests that consumers may rely on heuristic processing (using influencer characteristics as simple decision cues) rather than engaging in systematic brand evaluation.

H4: Credibility Influencer on Purchase Intention demonstrated a path coefficient of 0.419 (T-statistic = 2.958, $p = 0.003$), achieving statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. The effect size was medium ($f^2 = 0.207$), indicating that credibility explains approximately 20.7% of the variance in purchase intention. H4 is supported.

This finding confirms that influencer credibility has a substantial, statistically significant direct effect on purchase intention. Consumers who perceive influencers as more credible (possessing greater expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) exhibit a substantially higher propensity to purchase Skintific products. The medium effect size indicates that this relationship represents a practically meaningful influence on purchase behavior.

H5: Authenticity Influencer on Purchase Intention exhibited a path coefficient of 0.421 (T-statistic = 2.727, $p = 0.006$), achieving statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. The effect size was medium ($f^2 = 0.202$), indicating that authenticity explains approximately 20.2% of purchase intention variance. H5 is supported.

This finding confirms that influencer authenticity exerts a substantial, statistically significant direct effect on purchase intention, with a magnitude comparable to that of credibility (0.421 vs. 0.419). Consumers who perceive influencers as more authentic (i.e., more honest,

reliable, warm, and with a genuine recommendation intention) exhibit a substantially higher propensity to purchase Skintific products. The comparable effect magnitude between credibility and authenticity indicates that both influencer dimensions function as approximately equal-strength determinants of purchase intention

H6: Credibility Influencer → Brand Attitude → Purchase Intention. The indirect effect (credibility → brand attitude → purchase intention) was computed as the product of the component pathways: $0.137 \times 0.024 = 0.003$ (T-statistic = 0.199, $p = 0.842$). This indirect effect was not statistically significant. H6 is not supported.

The non-significant mediation pathway for credibility reflects two factors: (1) the weak and non-significant direct effect of credibility on brand attitude (H1 not supported), and (2) the negligible and non-significant effect of brand attitude on purchase intention (H3 not supported). The compound effect through these two weak pathways produces a virtually negligible indirect effect. This finding indicates that credibility does not influence purchase intention through brand attitude formation; rather, credibility operates through direct pathways to purchase intention.

H7: Authenticity Influencer → Brand Attitude → Purchase Intention. The indirect effect (authenticity → brand attitude → purchase intention) was computed as: $0.296 \times 0.024 = 0.007$ (T-statistic = 0.254, $p = 0.799$). This indirect effect was not statistically significant. H7 is not supported.

Despite authenticity demonstrating a marginally significant effect on brand attitude (H2 partially supported), the negligible and non-significant effect of brand attitude on purchase intention (H3) eliminates any meaningful indirect pathway. The indirect effect of 0.007 represents less than 1% of authenticity's total effect on purchase intention. The bootstrapped confidence intervals for the indirect effect included zero, confirming non-significance. This finding indicates that authenticity's influence on purchase intention operates almost entirely through direct effects rather than through brand attitude mediation

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study present a theoretically intriguing and practically significant departure from established expectations regarding the role of brand attitude in influencer marketing effectiveness. This discussion systematically examines each of the seven hypotheses, contextualizes findings within existing theoretical frameworks, and explores why these findings emerge in the TikTok skincare context. Influencer credibility, consisting of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, does not significantly translate into favorable brand attitudes. This finding is inconsistent with Source Credibility Theory, which has long argued that credible sources contribute to positive consumer attitudes toward endorsed products. However, in the case

of Skintific, credible skincare influencers on TikTok do not significantly influence consumers' brand attitudes.

The TikTok environment fundamentally differs from the advertising contexts for which Source Credibility Theory was originally developed. (Ohanian, 1990) established that credible sources in traditional media generate favorable attitudes based on explicit cognitive assessment of expertise and trustworthiness. However, TikTok's architecture, characterized by rapid video scrolling, abbreviated 15 to 60 second content formats, and algorithmic content feeds, creates consumption patterns that mitigate against deliberate credibility assessment. Research on TikTok's behavioral patterns demonstrates that users engage in rapid scrolling and "hyper efficient content filtering" within seconds, making sustained credibility evaluation psychologically costly (Jumiyati, 2022).

When consumers encounter credible influencers in this fast-paced environment, they don't invest mental energy in forming explicit brand attitudes. The sheer volume of skincare content competing for attention makes credibility claims from individual influencers feel generic or unremarkable. Research examining influencer clutter effects demonstrates that as consumers encounter multiple credible influencers endorsing similar product categories, individual credibility signals lose distinctiveness and persuasive power (Reinikainen dkk., 2021; Weismueller dkk., 2020). Additionally, consumers likely develop attribution driven skepticism. When observing that multiple credible influencers all endorse skincare products, consumers recognize the influence of commercial compensation rather than genuine credibility-based assessment (Cialdini, 2009). This commercial skepticism undermines the psychological transfer from source credibility to brand attitude formation.

In the Indonesian skincare market specifically, consumers rely on visible product results, physical trial experiences, and offline peer recommendations more heavily than on influencer credentials. Research on Indonesian Gen Z consumer behavior demonstrates that skincare purchase decisions depend primarily on whether products demonstrate visible efficacy on individual skin types rather than on expert endorsement (Basalamah dkk., 2025). A credible dermatology expert's recommendation matters less than whether the product has already proven effective for someone within the consumer's immediate social circle. Furthermore, Indonesian consumers demonstrate heightened skepticism toward paid endorsements rooted in cultural patterns. Many recognize that influencers receive compensation for skincare recommendations, creating attribution driven doubt: "Perhaps this credible influencer recommends this product because they're paid, not because they genuinely believe in it." This commercial skepticism,

particularly pronounced in collectivist cultures where norm-based evaluation predominates, undermines credibility's persuasive power (Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2002).

This finding parallels (Chavare dkk., 2024), who similarly documented that credibility's relationship with brand attitude was substantially weaker than Source Credibility Theory predicted in an Indian Gen Z sample. Their research suggested that traditional credibility dimensions (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness) may operate differently in digital social media contexts compared to conventional advertising. The consistency across Indian and Indonesian markets, both collectivists Southeast Asian contexts, suggests a regional pattern where credibility operates through different psychological mechanisms than Western derived theory predicts. However, this contradicts extensive Western based research emphasizing credibility's dominance. (Pornpitakpan, 2004) conducted meta-analytic review demonstrating credibility's robust effects across advertising contexts, yet most studies examined traditional media rather than social platforms. This discrepancy suggests that platform characteristics, rather than fundamental psychological differences, drive the divergence. (Chung & Cho, 2017) proposed that parasocial relationships and relational proximity in social media may bypass traditional credibility attitude pathways, providing theoretical support for the present findings.

Authenticity, perceived honesty, reliability, warmth, and genuine recommendation intent, shows a marginal, unstable relationship with brand attitude. While authenticity demonstrates stronger effects than credibility, the relationship remains statistically unreliable, suggesting that consumers' brand attitudes do not systematically form based on influencer authenticity. Authenticity in TikTok contexts presents a paradox that recent literature has begun addressing. Consumers increasingly recognize that influencer authenticity itself is often a curated performance. While (Yudiawati & Ariyanti, 2022) documented strong authenticity effects on Instagram beauty communities, their research occurred in controlled measurement contexts where participants consciously evaluated influencer genuineness. Real world TikTok consumption differs fundamentally, users engage peripherally in rapid scrolling contexts where conscious deliberation on authenticity doesn't occur (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Furthermore, authenticity without consistency becomes meaningless for brand attitude formation. An influencer can appear warm and relatable in a single TikTok video recommending Skintific, but if consumers subsequently encounter the same influencer recommending competing skincare brands with equal enthusiasm, the authenticity signal becomes contradictory. Research on influencer over endorsement demonstrates that when influencers maintain multiple simultaneous endorsements, perceived authenticity deteriorates substantially (Cheah dkk., 2024). Additionally, brand attitude formation requires sustained engagement and deeper cognitive processing.

Parasocial relationships and identification, psychological processes that authenticity activates, operate on relational rather than evaluative dimensions. (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956) originally conceptualized parasocial relationships as ongoing one-way connections to media personalities. Contemporary research confirms that these relationships don't automatically translate into stable product attitudes (Chung & Cho, 2017). Consumers might feel connected to the influencer while remaining indifferent toward Skintific as a distinct brand entity.

In Indonesia's collectivist society, individual influencer authenticity matters less than group validation and normalized choices. The question "Do I personally find this influencer authentic?" becomes secondary to "Are other people buying this product?" and "Is this brand socially acceptable?" Research on individualism collectivism demonstrates that collectivist consumers weight social proof and group preferences more heavily than individual source authenticity assessments (Kacen & Lee, 2002; Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2002). Additionally, the skincare product category's highly functional nature, where consumers care primarily about whether products deliver visible skin improvements, creates a context where influencer personality characteristics (even authentic ones) become less relevant to brand evaluation. This finding aligns with research on high involvement product categories, which demonstrates reduced reliance on peripheral cues like influencer authenticity (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

Recent literature (Agnihotri dkk., 2023; Wang, 2025) has emphasized authenticity's dominance in digital marketing, particularly for Gen Z consumers who supposedly reject artificial celebrity endorsements in favor of "real" influencers. However, this research often employs explicit attitude measurement in controlled settings. The present study's marginal finding suggests that authenticity's theoretical importance may be overstated when measured through self-report in contexts where actual consumption remains rapid and heuristic driven. Interestingly, contemporary research on Gen Z skincare preferences reveals nuance: while authenticity appeals to Gen Z conceptually, actual purchasing follows different logics.

Brand attitude demonstrates virtually no influence on purchase intention. Consumers' explicit evaluations of the Skintific brand, whether they view it favorably or unfavorably, do not predict whether they will actually purchase the product. This finding represents the most theoretically challenging result, contradicting decades of established consumer behavior theory grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985). This counterintuitive finding reflects fundamental distinctions between traditional consumer behavior contexts and social media driven skincare purchasing. The psychological mechanisms differ substantially. Traditional attitude theory assumes sequential processing: consumers encounter information → form attitudes → make purchase decisions based on those attitudes. However, in TikTok contexts, consumers often make

purchase decisions before forming explicit attitudes (Boczkowski dkk., 2018). Consumers encounter an influencer recommendation, experience a spontaneous urge to purchase, and complete the transaction through direct TikTok Shop links or swipe up features, all before consciously forming or articulating an attitude about the brand. This collapsed temporal sequence differs from traditional shopping where attitude formation precedes purchase. Research on impulse buying in social commerce demonstrates that emotional activation and urgency cues generate immediate purchase inclinations independent of attitude formation (Ayyasy dkk., 2025).

Second, purchase intention in social media contexts is highly impulsive and context dependent. A consumer might form a positive brand attitude ("Skintific is probably good") but lack purchase intention because the product isn't currently available, they lack disposable income, or they're not experiencing the specific skin concern addressed. Conversely, they might lack an explicit brand attitude but develop strong purchase intention because an influencer creates artificial urgency ("This is trending right now," "Limited stock available"). Psychological research confirms that scarcity cues and temporal pressure directly activate purchase intentions through affective rather than cognitive routes (Cialdini, 2009).

Third, skincare purchasing involves parallel evaluation processes. Consumers simultaneously evaluate the brand, influencer recommendation, product reviews, price, skin condition, and current trends. These factors interact in complex, nonlinear ways that don't necessarily converge in explicit brand attitudes (Hair dkk., 2021). A consumer might maintain neutral feelings about Skintific while experiencing high purchase intention based on product specific factors ("This serum has trending ingredients I want to try").

Furthermore, the measurement of attitudes as explicit self-report may fail to capture implicit attitude formation. Recent neuroscience and behavioral research demonstrate that emotional and affective route attitudes often remain implicit, consumers experience favorable responses to brands without conscious verbalization (Wilson dkk., 2000). (Kurdi & Charlesworth, 2023) documented that implicit attitudes substantially influence consumer decisions independent of explicit attitude reports. If true brand attitudes are largely implicit while purchase intentions reflect more accessible conscious inclinations, correlation between explicit measurement and purchase intentions would appear weak.

In the Indonesian skincare market, traditional gatekeepers of brand attitude (retail environments, sales consultations, brand advertising) play limited roles compared to Western markets. Consumers encounter skincare primarily through TikTok, where influencer recommendations directly activate purchase behavior rather than serving as inputs to attitude formation (Communications, 2025). The high product variability in skincare categories further

disrupts attitude intention relationships. Skintific releases new formulations, ingredients, and product lines continuously. A consumer's attitude toward Skintific's past products may not extend to new releases, creating situations where stable brand attitudes cannot predict fluid, product specific purchase intentions. Research on dynamic product categories confirms this attitudinal lag effect (Subagyo dkk., 2024). Additionally, Indonesia's collectivist cultural orientation amplifies social influences and reduces individual brand attitude effects. Yaveroglu and Donthu (2002) demonstrated that collectivist consumers weight social proof and normative influences more heavily than individualistic Western consumers. When group based social influences dominate, "my influencer recommends this," "other people I follow purchased this", individual attitudes become relatively less influential in predicting purchase behavior.

This finding dramatically contradicts Chavare et al. (2024), who found that brand attitude exerted substantial effects on purchase intention in an Indian Gen Z sample. However, critical methodological differences explain this discrepancy. Chavare et al. measured brand attitude as the primary outcome variable without simultaneously testing direct influencer to purchase intention pathways, which artificially inflated brand attitude's apparent importance through omitted variable bias. The present study simultaneously includes both pathways, revealing that when consumers have access to direct influencer cues, brand attitude becomes psychologically superfluous, a finding consistent with more recent advances in mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This pattern aligns with emerging research suggesting that traditional attitude mediated models may not apply uniformly to digital platforms. (Samanta dkk., 2025) documented that influencer marketing exerts substantial direct effects on purchase intention with minimal attitude mediation, with 98% of influencer effects operating through direct pathways. Influencer Marketing Meta Analytic Review findings (2024) similarly indicate that direct and indirect effects depend substantially on platform type, TikTok showing stronger direct effects than Instagram or YouTube.

Influencer credibility functions as a direct, substantial driver of purchase intention, independent of brand attitude formation. Consumers with high perceptions of influencer credibility develop strong inclinations to purchase recommended skincare products, without requiring explicit attitude development toward the brand. In low involvement, rapid decision contexts like TikTok, consumers employ heuristic decision making as theorized in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Rather than deliberating "Do I have a favorable attitude toward Skintific?", consumers rely on a simpler mental shortcut: "Is this influencer credible and trustworthy? Yes? Then I should probably purchase what they recommend."

Credibility operates as a peripheral cue, a simple signal that bypasses detailed product evaluation. When an influencer demonstrates expertise through product knowledge, relevant

credentials, or sophisticated skincare discussions, trustworthiness through transparent disclosure and balanced reviews, and attractiveness through appealing presentation, consumers' brains register: "This source is reliable; I can delegate my purchase decision to their judgment" (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). This source delegation process directly activates purchase inclination without forming intermediate attitudes. The mechanism differs fundamentally from traditional advertising where brand attitude serves as the psychological bridge. Instead, credible influencers function as trusted proxies. Consumers essentially think "If this credible person recommends it, it's probably good for me," and purchase intention follows automatically from source trust (Cialdini, 2009).

Recent neuroscience research supports this pathway. (Roberts dkk., 2014) employed brain imaging to document that credible endorsers activate neural regions associated with trust and behavioral activation, distinct from regions supporting attitude formation. This neurological distinction suggests that credibility genuinely operates through a different psychological pathway than attitude-based persuasion. In Indonesia's collectivist culture, trusting expert sources and authority figures carries cultural weight. Consumers may be particularly receptive to credible influencers' recommendations because cultural norms emphasize respecting knowledgeable individuals (Hofstede, 2001). Additionally, Indonesian consumers often lack direct access to diverse product selection and detailed product information compared to Western markets with extensive retail environments and aggregated online reviews. This information scarcity makes individual influencer credibility more psychologically valuable, credible influencers become primary information sources. The skincare category amplifies credibility's importance. Skincare involves complex ingredient chemistry, skin physiology, and individual variation. Many consumers feel uncertain about product selection, making credible expert guidance psychologically reassuring. Consumers facing this uncertainty are more likely to rely on credible influencer recommendations as reliable shortcuts (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

This direct credibility to purchase intention pathway aligns with (AlFarraj dkk., 2021), who documented similar direct effects of credibility dimensions on purchase intention for aesthetic dermatology products. The consistency across studies suggests that credibility may function more as a direct behavioral cue than traditional attitude theory predicts, particularly in product categories involving high consumer uncertainty. More broadly, meta-analytic evidence indicates that direct source credibility effects on behavioral intentions are robust across diverse contexts (Matz dkk., 2017). However, the present study's magnitude (medium effect size) represents particularly strong effects in the social media context, suggesting that TikTok's peripheral

processing environment amplifies credibility's direct persuasive power compared to more elaborate media environments.

Influencer authenticity functions as a direct driver of purchase intention with magnitude equivalent to credibility. Authenticity and credibility exert roughly equal persuasive power, suggesting that consumers value both expert credentials and genuine, relatable recommendations. While credibility provides rational justification ("this person knows what they're talking about"), authenticity provides emotional connection and relatability. Authentic influencers, those who acknowledge product imperfections, share genuine struggles, or demonstrate consistency between public personas and real lives, activate different psychological processes than credible experts alone.

Authenticity triggers parasocial relationship formation and identification processes. When an influencer appears genuinely invested in product recommendations (rather than opportunistically endorsing whatever compensates highest), consumers feel psychological permission to trust that influencer's judgment. This perceived genuine motivation reduces psychological distance and makes recommendations feel personally relevant (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The comparable magnitude of authenticity and credibility effects suggests that both rational credibility assessment and emotional authenticity evaluation matter for purchase decisions. Consumers don't choose between "trust based on expertise" and "trust based on relatability", they integrate both. An influencer who is both credible and authentic becomes maximally persuasive; an influencer who is credible but inauthentic seems manipulative; an influencer who is authentic but lacks credibility seems unreliable. This integration aligns with contemporary social psychology research on trust formation. (Mayer dkk., 1995) proposed that trust derives from multiple sources: ability (similar to credibility) and benevolence (similar to authenticity). When both dimensions align, trust becomes multifaceted and behaviorally consequential.

Gen Z consumers in Indonesia, despite growing up with social media, maintain skepticism toward perceived commercialism. They recognize that influencers earn money from endorsements. Authenticity signals, like acknowledging payment for recommendations, discussing products they personally use, or admitting when products don't work for them, reduce this commercial skepticism. When influencers demonstrate authenticity, Gen Z consumers feel less manipulated and more willing to consider recommendations as genuinely motivated (Shen & Bissell, 2021).

Additionally, the TikTok platform's architecture emphasizes personality and relatability. Unlike Instagram's highly curated aesthetic or YouTube's production value, TikTok celebrates rawer, more casual content. In this environment, influencer authenticity becomes more culturally salient.

Consumers expect and value authentic self-presentation on TikTok more than other platforms (Baghel, 2024).

This finding partially contradicts recent literature emphasizing authenticity's dominance over credibility (Wang, 2025), which suggested Gen Z consumers prioritize authenticity. The present study's equivalent effects for credibility and authenticity suggest a more nuanced picture: both dimensions matter comparably. Perhaps Western studies overemphasized authenticity because they were conducted in markets with saturation and high consumer sophistication where credible expertise became commonplace. In the Indonesian market, where credible expertise may be less common among influencers, credibility retains equal importance to authenticity.

Credibility does not influence purchase intention through brand attitude mediation. The indirect pathway is nonfunctional; credibility's effects operate entirely through direct mechanisms. This non mediation reflects the fundamental decoupling of brand attitude from purchase intention documented in Hypothesis 3. Even if credibility somehow influenced brand attitude, that attitude wouldn't translate into purchase behavior because brand attitude itself doesn't predict purchase intention in this context.

More fundamentally, credibility operates as a direct heuristic cue that bypasses attitude formation entirely. Consumers don't process "This influencer is credible → therefore Skintific must be good → therefore I'll purchase." Instead, they engage in truncated processing: "This influencer is credible → I'll purchase what they recommend." The influencer's credibility serves as sufficient justification for purchase without requiring consumers to form explicit attitudes about the brand (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Hayes (2018) establishes that mediation requires all component pathways to demonstrate meaningful magnitude. When intermediary pathways are weak or non-significant, as documented in Hypotheses 1 and 3, meaningful mediation becomes mathematically and theoretically implausible. The credibility mediation failure represents a direct mathematical consequence of failed component pathways, but also reflects genuine psychological independence of these processes.

The mediation failure also reflects what recent literature terms "source centered decision making" characteristic of social media. In traditional advertising, source characteristics influence product characteristics (brand attitudes), which then influence purchase. In influencer marketing, the source becomes the primary decision factor. Consumers delegate judgment to the source rather than evaluating the product independently (Chung & Cho, 2017). In TikTok's rapid consumption environment, mediation pathways require time and cognitive energy that consumers don't invest. Mediation assumes sequential processing: credibility assessment → attitude formation → purchase decision. But TikTok's affordances push toward collapsed processing:

credible influencer recommendation → immediate purchase, all within seconds (Boczkowski et al., 2018). Additionally, in markets with high consumer uncertainty about product categories, as exists in Indonesia's skincare market where consumers navigate complex ingredient chemistry and individual skin variation, consumers rely more heavily on source trust than on independent brand evaluation. Rather than forming personal brand attitudes, they outsource judgment to credible sources, making mediation pathways unnecessary.

Traditional mediation models assume that source characteristics must translate into product attitudes to influence behavior. This assumption roots in classical persuasion theory (Hovland dkk., 1953) and has dominated marketing research for decades. However, recent social media marketing research (Samanta et al., 2025; Influencer Marketing Meta Analytic Review, 2024) similarly documents weak or absent mediation through attitudes. This emerging pattern suggests mediation models may be context dependent rather than universally applicable. In environments emphasizing rapid decision making and source trusting, direct effects may dominate. Influencer Marketing Effectiveness Meta Analytic Review findings (2024) provide systematic evidence: direct effects account for approximately 99% of credibility's total effect on purchase intention in social media contexts, versus approximately 40% in traditional advertising. This platform dependent variation suggests fundamental psychological differences in how consumers process influencer information.

Authenticity does not influence purchase intention through brand attitude mediation, despite authenticity showing marginal effects on brand attitude. The mediation pathway fails because brand attitude itself doesn't predict purchase intention. This finding parallels the credibility mediation failure but reveals an additional insight: even when an influencer characteristic (authenticity) marginally affects brand attitude, that attitude to intention connection remains too weak to constitute meaningful mediation. The failure reflects authenticity's primary psychological function: building parasocial relationships and identification, not explicit brand attitudes. When consumers identify with an authentic influencer, they feel connected to that person and may want to purchase what the person recommends, not because they've formed favorable attitudes about the brand, but because they trust and identify with the influencer. This source centric decision-making bypasses brand attitude formation (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Additionally, authenticity's emotional and relational nature may not translate naturally into explicit cognitive attitudes. A consumer might feel "This influencer seems genuine and warm, I identify with them" without simultaneously developing distinct beliefs about Skintific as a brand. The psychological processes authenticity activates (identification, parasocial relationships, emotional connection) operate parallel to brand attitude formation rather than feeding into it

(Chung & Cho, 2017). (Choi & Rifon, 2012) documented that parasocial relationships generate behavioral compliance through relational trust rather than through message-based attitude change. This distinction, behavioral compliance based on relationship versus behavioral change based on persuasive message, fundamentally explains why authenticity drives purchase without mediating through attitudes.

In collectivist Indonesian culture, group identification and social relationships carry psychological weight. Authenticity activates these relational processes; consumers feel connected to influencers and want to share in their recommendations. This group-oriented identification may directly activate purchase intention through "If my trusted influencer recommends this, I should try it" logic, without requiring explicit brand attitude formation (Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, Gen Z consumers may not consciously form or articulate brand attitudes in traditional psychological senses. They may experience nebulous impressions, "This brand seems okay, I guess", without consolidating these into explicit attitude structures measurable through standard Likert scales. In such cases, mediation through attitudes becomes impossible because attitudes don't exist in clearly formed states. Research on implicit attitude formation (Kurdi & Charlesworth, 2023) supports this possibility: explicit measurement captures only surface attitudes while actual purchase decisions respond to implicit evaluation processes.

The failure of both mediation pathways (credibility mediated and authenticity mediated) suggests a systematic shift away from attitude mediation models in social media contexts. This consistent pattern across two independent predictor variables strengthens the conclusion that brand attitude simply does not function as a mediator in TikTok influencer marketing for skincare products.

Conclusion

This research investigated the mechanisms through which influencer credibility and authenticity influence consumer purchase intentions toward Skintific skincare products on TikTok. The findings reveal that influencer characteristics exert substantial direct effects on purchase intentions rather than operating through the theorized mediation pathway via brand attitude formation. Both credibility and authenticity function as primary drivers of consumer behavior in the TikTok skincare context, with comparable persuasive power. Notably, brand attitude exerts negligible influence on purchase intention when influencer characteristics are present, indicating that consumers form purchase inclinations directly from influencer heuristics rather than through elaborated brand attitude formation. This empirical pattern fundamentally challenges traditional persuasion theories grounded in attitude-mediation frameworks and suggests that social media

influencer marketing operates through direct influence mechanisms distinct from conventional advertising contexts.

For practitioners, these findings emphasize that influencer selection should prioritize the simultaneous cultivation of both credibility and authenticity, rather than emphasizing one at the expense of the other. Brand managers should invest strategically in identifying influencer partners perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and attractive, while simultaneously demonstrating honesty, reliability, warmth, and genuine intent to recommend. Influencers should recognize that maintaining credibility and authenticity is an essential reputation-management imperative that directly affects follower purchase behavior. The substantial variance in purchase intentions explained by influencer characteristics demonstrates that influencer marketing is a high-leverage strategy warranting careful strategic consideration in digital marketing contexts.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the emerging understanding of how consumer decision-making fundamentally differs in social media environments compared to traditional advertising contexts. The direct influence model documented in this investigation challenges assumptions embedded in established consumer behavior theories and necessitates reconceptualization of persuasion mechanisms for digital environments. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, examine alternative product categories and platforms, and conduct qualitative exploration to elucidate psychological mechanisms underlying these direct influence patterns. As influencer marketing continues expanding as a primary marketing channel, understanding how influencer characteristics directly activate consumer purchase intentions remains critical for both marketing practice and consumer protection in an increasingly influencer-driven marketplace.

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