

Beyond Popularity: What Really Drives Brand Perception in Tiktok Influencer Marketing?

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how TikTok influencers affect consumers' attitudes toward brands and purchase intentions among TikTok Shop users in Indonesia. Although previous research has employed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine influencer impacts, little attention has been paid to the unique dynamics of TikTok's platform within emerging digital markets. Building on TPB and incorporating elements from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), this research investigates six factors: perceived credibility, trust, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, perceived expertise, and perceived congruence. A survey of 200 users was analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with distinct reflective and formative constructs. The findings indicate that trust, subjective norms, perceived expertise, and perceived congruence significantly drive attitudes toward influencers, which in turn shape brand attitude. However, in a surprising twist, neither influencer attitude nor brand attitude directly predicts purchase intention. This paper discusses the implications of these results, emphasizing that cultural context and the entertainment value intrinsic to TikTok may override traditional predictors. We provide theoretical contributions, suggest a visual model to clarify relationships, and outline implications for marketers.

Keywords: Tiktok, Influencer, Brand Perception, Purchase Intentions.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally reshaped the way consumers interact with brands, particularly in emerging digital markets. Among these platforms, TikTok has emerged not merely as a site of entertainment but as a hybridized space for commerce and community. With its short-form, algorithm-driven content, TikTok fosters a form of engagement that is emotionally resonant, socially contagious, and increasingly transactional. In Indonesia, TikTok's evolution into TikTok Shop reflects a significant shift in consumer behavior, blurring the lines between watching, liking, and buying—especially among digitally savvy Gen Z and Millennial consumers.

Indonesia's digital economy, among the fastest-growing in Southeast Asia, offers a distinctive context for investigating these dynamics. As of 2024, the country hosts over 139 million TikTok users (Ritzi, 2024), making it a critical market for platform-driven commerce. Unlike more mature e-commerce ecosystems, Indonesian consumers increasingly make impulse or socially-influenced purchases via integrated video content—an emerging behavioral pattern that current models of digital persuasion

often overlook. Through the integration of video content and direct purchasing features, TikTok Shop offers new strategic avenues for brands to influence consumer behavior in increasingly interactive settings (Amalia & Aryanto, 2023).

Within this context, influencer marketing has emerged as a key strategy, leveraging content creators' perceived credibility, expertise, and social appeal to shape consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions (Li & Peng, 2021). Recent studies show that collaboration with influencers whose values align with a brand can increase conversion rates by up to 30% compared to traditional digital advertising (Fitri & Syaefulloh, 2023a). TikTok's continued expansion, making Indonesia its second-largest user base globally with more than 112 million users (Annur, 2023), highlights its growing strategic importance for digital marketers.

While influencer marketing has been widely studied in the context of Instagram and YouTube (Lou & Yuan, 2019), much of this work has relied on established psychological models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and focused primarily on static content or Western audiences. TikTok, with its hybrid nature, introduces unique affordances: real-time interaction, short-form storytelling, and viral algorithmic distribution. These characteristics may amplify or diminish the influence of traditional constructs like source credibility, trust, or attitude toward the brand.

To address these gaps, this study investigates the influence of perceived credibility, trust, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, perceived expertise, perceived congruence, and attitudes toward influencers on Attitudes towards brand and purchase intentions among TikTok Shop users in Indonesia. Drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and integrating psychological constructs within a social media e-commerce context, this study proposes a comprehensive model to better understand consumer purchase behavior on emerging digital platforms.

Attitudes toward influencers have been shown to directly shape consumer intent and receptivity to marketing messages. For instance, Ilieva et al. (2024) demonstrated that favorable attitudes toward influencers significantly enhance purchase intentions through affective and cognitive processing routes. In the Indonesian context, Azkiah et al. (2023) confirmed that social media influencers positively impact both consumer attitudes and buying decisions.

Perceived credibility is a foundational component in influencer marketing. Kim and Patel (2019) found that influencers perceived as authentic and trustworthy significantly enhance consumer engagement and intent to purchase. Sokolova and Kefi (2019) similarly emphasized that credibility reinforces parasocial relationships, which in turn mediate purchase intention.

Trust in influencers also plays a pivotal role. Iqbal et al. (2023) noted that although trust might not always directly affect attitudes, it operates through perceived credibility and expertise to shape consumer responses. Berry (2024) warned that low trust levels can damage brand perception and undermine marketing outcomes.

Perceived behavioral control refers to consumers' belief in their ability to perform a behavior and has been widely validated as a predictor of intention and action (Ajzen, 1991). This variable is essential in e-commerce, where user confidence in navigating purchase processes affects conversion rates and behavioral intention.

Subjective norms—the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior—also significantly influence consumer decisions. Ajzen (1991) emphasized their relevance, and they have been validated in numerous digital behavior studies, particularly in social commerce settings where peer influence is prominent.

Perceived expertise, or the belief that the influencer possesses relevant knowledge or skill, has been shown to boost consumer confidence. Iqbal et al. (2023) and Han & Balabanis (2024) found that higher perceived expertise translates into stronger consumer-influencer rapport and brand interest.

Perceived congruence, or the alignment between influencer and product, enhances marketing effectiveness. Lim & Zhang (2022) demonstrated that congruence increases perceived authenticity and reduces consumer resistance, leading to better ad reception and higher purchase intention.

Attitudes towards brand are shaped by the above variables and play a mediating role in purchase intentions. Liu & Zheng (2024) found that source credibility and parasocial relationships improve brand evaluations, while Zhao et al. (2024) showed these attitudes significantly predict purchasing outcomes.

Finally, purchase intentions are the ultimate outcome variable in this model. Meta-analyses by Li & Balabanis (2024) and studies like Azkiah et al. (2023) consistently affirm the predictive power of positive attitudes—both toward influencers and brands—on consumer buying decisions.

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining how psychological and social mechanisms drive consumer attitudes and intentions within TikTok Shop in Indonesia. By integrating TPB with elements from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), we explore how perceived credibility, trust, behavioral control, subjective norms, expertise, and congruence influence attitudes toward influencers, brand perception, and ultimately, purchase intention.

Our contribution is threefold. First, we empirically test a comprehensive model of influencer marketing adapted for the unique architecture of TikTok. Second, we contextualize this model within Indonesia's dynamic, culturally specific digital economy. Third, we examine the unexpected finding that neither influencer nor brand attitudes significantly predict purchase intention—challenging conventional assumptions in digital marketing theory.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on TikTok Shop as a hybrid platform combining entertainment and e-commerce, the contextualization within Indonesia's rapidly evolving digital market, and the integration of multiple psychological and behavioral constructs to assess their collective influence on brand perception and purchasing outcomes. Ultimately, this study seeks to advance theoretical frameworks in influencer marketing while offering practical implications for brands seeking to optimize their strategies in digitally driven consumer landscapes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) is a foundational framework for understanding human behavior. It posits that an individual's behavioral intentions are shaped by three main factors: their attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These components interact to predict the likelihood that a person will engage in a particular behavior. Attitude reflects the degree to which performing the behavior is positively or negatively valued. Subjective norms involve the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior, while perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of digital marketing and consumer behavior, TPB has been widely applied to explain online purchase decisions. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) expanded the theory by emphasizing that perceived behavioral control directly affects behavior, particularly when the behavior is not entirely under volitional control. Studies like Cameron et al. (2020) also found that external factors, such as technological ease and social encouragement, enhance the predictive power of TPB in online contexts. Thus, TPB provides a strong theoretical basis for examining how TikTok influencers impact Attitudes towards brand and consumer purchase intentions.

Attitudes Toward Influencers

Attitudes toward influencers significantly mediate the relationship between influencer attributes and consumer behavior outcomes. A positive attitude toward an influencer increases the likelihood that consumers will accept brand recommendations (Hartanto et al., 2023). Favorable attitudes can amplify the perceived value of the brand being promoted. Azkiah and Hartono (2023) also observed that emotional connection and perceived similarity to influencers enhance consumers' trust and loyalty. Chetioui et al. (2020) confirmed that when consumers develop positive feelings toward influencers, they are more inclined to associate those feelings with the brands the influencers endorse, ultimately boosting purchase intentions.

Perceived Credibility

Perceived credibility is the extent to which a communicator is perceived as trustworthy and believable by the audience. In influencer marketing, credibility is crucial because consumers often rely on the influencer's perceived honesty and reliability to judge the authenticity of brand endorsements (Pratama, 2024). Influencers perceived as credible can transfer this trust to the brands they promote, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of marketing efforts (Belanche et al., 2021). Magano et al. (2022) found that perceived credibility significantly impacts consumers' willingness to engage with content, trust the promoted brand, and ultimately make a purchase decision. High credibility reduces scepticism and increases message acceptance. Consequently, marketers are increasingly prioritizing the selection of influencers who possess high perceived credibility among target audiences to ensure successful campaigns. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Perceived credibility positively influences attitudes toward influencers.

Trust

Trust is a cornerstone in consumer decision-making and plays a pivotal role in influencer marketing. When consumers perceive influencers as trustworthy, they are more likely to accept their product recommendations and form favorable Attitudes towards brand (Asad, 2024). Trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty, which is especially important in the online environment where consumers cannot physically experience products before purchasing (Santiago et al., 2020). Schoorman et al. (2018) emphasized that trust is built through consistent, transparent, and honest communication. In the context of TikTok, influencers who provide genuine product reviews, engage authentically with followers, and disclose sponsorships transparently are more likely to foster consumer trust. Thus, trust mediates between influencer attributes and consumer behavior outcomes, such as brand loyalty and purchase intention. Therefore:

H2: Trust positively influences attitudes toward influencers.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to an individual's belief about how easy or difficult it is to perform a behavior. According to TPB, when consumers perceive that they have the ability and resources to act, they are more likely to intend and carry out the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In online shopping, perceived control includes factors like ease of access to platforms, payment options, and product availability. Bangun et al. (2023) found that in influencer marketing, PBC also relates to how easily consumers can act on recommendations. If influencers simplify the purchasing process by providing links, discount codes, or easy tutorials, consumers' perceived behavioral control increases. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) additionally point out that high perceived control enhances the predictive power of intentions, emphasizing its importance in the online purchase journey. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Perceived behavioral control positively influences attitudes toward influencers.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms represent the perceived social pressures individuals feel regarding whether or not to perform a behavior. In social media contexts, subjective norms are shaped by community influences, peer approval, and popular trends endorsed by influencers (Siaputra & Enrico, 2020). Influencers, by virtue of their social standing, can create normative pressures that encourage followers to engage with promoted brands. Hegner et al. (2017) demonstrated that subjective norms significantly predict health-related behaviors in social contexts, which translates similarly into consumer behaviors online. Varni et al. (2024) further confirmed that when influencers successfully establish certain behaviors—such as adopting a new product—as desirable within their communities, followers are more likely to comply due to social conformity mechanisms. Based on these findings, the hypothesis proposed is:

H4: Subjective norms positively influence attitudes toward influencers.

Perceived Expertise

Perceived expertise refers to the belief that an influencer possesses relevant knowledge, competence, or skill regarding the products they endorse. Expertise enhances persuasive power, making consumers more likely to accept information and act upon it (Kim & Yoon, 2024). An influencer viewed as an expert in a particular niche, such as beauty, fitness, or technology, is more likely to successfully influence purchase decisions. Sesar et al. (2022) supported that expertise fosters message credibility and emotional trust. Faizal and Dewi (2023) added that influencers who consistently display expertise through detailed content, tutorials, or product demonstrations help consumers reduce information uncertainty, enhancing their attitudes toward both the influencer and the endorsed brands. Therefore:

H5: Perceived expertise positively influences attitudes toward influencers.

Perceived Congruence

Perceived congruence is the degree of alignment between the influencer's image and the brand's identity. Zogaj et al. (2021) explain that when consumers perceive a good fit between an influencer and a brand, it leads to higher credibility, better attitudes toward the brand, and stronger purchase intentions. Congruence fosters authenticity, making endorsements seem natural rather than commercial. Astarini and Sumardi (2021) highlighted that consumers are more likely to form positive Attitudes towards brand when the influencer's persona resonates with their self-image. Similarly, Rayasam and Khattri (2022) found that high congruence enhances perceived relevance, thus strengthening the psychological bond between the consumer and the brand. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Perceived congruence positively influences attitudes toward influencers.

Attitudes Towards Brand and Purchase Intentions

Attitudes towards brand represent consumers' overall evaluations of a brand, influencing their emotional and behavioral responses. Positive attitudes towards brand are critical antecedents of purchase intentions, reflecting consumers' trust and emotional engagement with a brand (Al Mamun et al., 2023). Brands that foster favorable attitudes through influencer partnerships can expect higher purchase rates. Pena-García et al. (2020) also emphasized the mediating role of attitudes towards brand in building consumer loyalty. Hmoud et al. (2022) argued that strong attitudes towards brand lead not only to initial purchases but also to long-term brand commitment. Hence, managing Attitudes towards brand through effective influencer collaborations is vital for sustainable brand growth. Thus, based on previous research, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Attitudes toward influencers positively influence attitudes towards brands.

H8: Attitudes toward influencers positively influence purchase intentions.

H9: Attitudes towards brands positively influence purchase intentions.

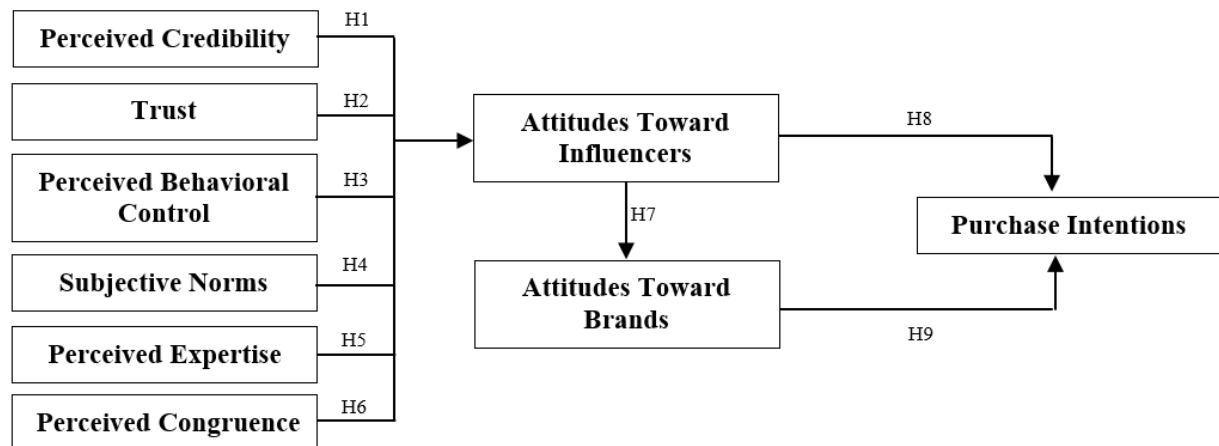


Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach, focusing on statistically measurable data to examine the influence of TikTok influencers on brand attitudes and purchase intentions. The study applies a survey-based method, chosen for its efficiency in gathering standardized data from a large number of respondents. Data collection and analysis followed systematic scientific procedures to ensure validity and reliability.

The research investigates eight independent variables: perceived credibility, trust, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, perceived expertise, and perceived congruence, attitude toward influencer, and brand attitude. One dependent variable—purchase intention—is also examined. All variables were measured using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree (1)" to "Strongly Agree (6)", as recommended for enhanced validity and clarity in behavioral research.

The target population comprises Indonesian TikTok users who have engaged in shopping through TikTok Shop. Given the unknown total number of users, convenience sampling was used. Based on Hair et al. (2010), the sample size was determined using a ratio of 5–10 participants per indicator. With 23 indicators in this study, the appropriate sample size ranged from 115 to 230. This study collected responses from 200 respondents. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS. This method accommodates complex models with multiple constructs and is effective even with non-normally distributed data or relatively small sample sizes.

RESULTS

Validity and Reliability Testing

There are two primary forms of validity assessment: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is essential for evaluating whether the constructs measured in a study demonstrate an adequate level of agreement. This type of validity can be assessed through two key indicators: outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As stated by Hair et al. (2014), a construct is considered to have acceptable convergent validity when the AVE value meets or exceeds the threshold of 0.50. The outer loading values used to assess convergent validity are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Outer Loadings

	ATTBR	ATTIN	CONG	CRED	EXP	PBC	PIN	SUBN	TR
ATTBR1	1.000								
ATTIN1		0.865							
ATTIN2		0.840							
ATTIN3		0.713							
ATTIN4		0.885							
CONG1			0.901						
CONG2			0.931						
CONG3			0.918						
CRED1				0.734					
CRED2				0.811					
CRED3				0.874					
CRED4				0.725					
EXP1					1.000				
PBC1						1.000			
PIN1							1.000		
SUBN								1.000	
TR1									1.000

Source: Primary Data (2025)

It can be concluded from Table 1 that all indicators meet the required criteria, with values exceeding the threshold of 0.50. Therefore, it can be interpreted that all indicators exhibit satisfactory loading factor values. Based on these results, the analysis can proceed to the next stage of testing.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attitudes towards brands (ATTBR)	1,000
Attitudes toward influencers (ATTIN)	0,686
Perceived congruence (CONG)	0,841
Perceived credibility (CRED)	0,622
Perceived expertise (EXP)	1,000
Perceived behavioral control (PBC)	1,000
Purchase Intentions (PIN)	0,860
Subjective Norms (SN)	1,000
Trust (TR)	1,000

Source: Primary Data (2025)

As shown in Table 2, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are all greater than 0.50, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed by analyzing the values of all items across the measured variables. These results suggest that the constructs demonstrate

satisfactory validity in terms of AVE. The detailed results of the discriminant validity test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	ATTBR	ATTIN	CONG	CRED	EXP	PBC	PIN	SUBN	TR
ATTBR	1.000								
ATTIN	0.760	0.828							
CONG	0.717	0.756	0.917						
CRED	0.509	0.484	0.413	0.789					
EXP	0.611	0.624	0.518	0.616	1.000				
PBC	0.282	0.190	0.256	0.127	0.313	1.000			
PIN	0.079	0.026	0.050	-0.033	0.042	0.038	1.000		

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The discriminant validity results in Table 3 are interpreted using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which assesses the extent to which constructs in the model are distinct from one another. The diagonal values (e.g., 1.000; 0.828; 0.917; etc.) represent the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct. AVE indicates the amount of variance captured by a construct relative to variance due to error, with values above 0.50 indicating acceptable convergent validity. According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of AVE for each construct should exceed its correlations with other constructs (off-diagonal values) to establish discriminant validity.

The results show that each construct meets this requirement. For instance, the square root of AVE for Brand Attitude (ATTBR) is 1.000, greater than its correlations with other constructs (e.g., 0.760; 0.717; 0.509; etc.). Similar patterns are observed for Attitude Toward Influencer (ATTIN), Congruence (CONG), Credibility (CRED), Experience (EXP), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), Purchase Intention (PIN), Subjective Norms (SUBN), and Trust (TR), with each construct's AVE square root exceeding its inter-construct correlations. These findings confirm that all constructs exhibit satisfactory discriminant validity.

Reliability testing can be conducted using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. A variable is considered reliable if both its Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceed 0.40 (Noor, 2017). As shown in Table 4, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables indicate reliability, as each meets the established threshold. The detailed results are presented in Table 4 below.

Tabel 4. Cronbach's Alpha dan Composite Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reability (CR)
Attitudes towards brands (ATTBR)	1,000	1,000
Attitudes toward influencers (ATTIN)	0,847	0,686
Perceived congruence (CONG)	0,906	0,841
Perceived credibility (CRED)	0,801	0,622
Perceived expertise (EXP)	1,000	1,000
Perceived behavioral control (PBC)	1,000	1,000
Purchase Intentions (PIN)	0,910	0,860
Subjective Norms (SN)	1,000	1,000

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reability (CR)
Trust (TR)	1,000	1,000

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Hypothesis Testing

Path coefficients are used to test hypotheses and are calculated using the SmartPLS software with the bootstrapping technique. Based on the results shown in Tables 5, hypotheses H2, H4, H5, H6, and H7 are supported, while H1, H3, H8 and H9 are not supported. This is consistent with the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2016), which state that the T-statistic must exceed 1.96 and the P-value must be below 0.05 to indicate statistical significance. Therefore, only H2, H4, H5, H6, and H7 meet these conditions. Table 5 presents the detailed results of the path coefficient analysis.

Tabel 5. Path Coefficient Result

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistic	P values	Details	H
CRED → ATTIN	0.004	0.057	0.023	0.982	Not supported	H1
TR → ATTIN	0.120	0.055	2.303	0.021	Supported	H2
PBC→ATTIN	0.049	0.077	0.767	0.443	Not supported	H3
SUBN→ATTIN	-0.213	0.073	3.068	0.002	Supported	H4
EXP→ATTIN	0.305	0.069	4.539	0.000	Supported	H5
CONG→ ATTIN	0.564	0.080	6.922	0.000	Supported	H6
ATTIN→ATTBR	0.760	0.034	22.142	0.000	Supported	H7
ATTIN→PIN	-0.080	0.106	0.740	0.459	Not supported	H8
ATTBR→PIN	0.139	0.104	1.326	0.185	Not supported	H9

Source: Primary Data (2025)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that perceived credibility does not have a significant effect on attitudes toward influencers on the TikTok platform in Indonesia, as indicated by a coefficient value of 0.982. This suggests that credibility alone is insufficient in shaping audience attitudes. Supporting this result, Magano et al. (2022) found that although trust and expertise are traditionally seen as crucial components of influencer credibility, their influence on audience perception can be inconsistent. Factors such as content relevance and emotional resonance between influencer and audience are often more impactful. Kirana et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of content alignment with audience interests in fostering engagement on a highly visual platform like TikTok. Empirical data from this study reinforce this notion, with 27.8% of respondents prioritizing content creation expertise over reputation, which scored only 16.9%. Therefore, this hypothesis is not supported.

In contrast, trust was found to significantly influence attitudes toward influencers, with a coefficient of 0.018. This result is aligned with the findings of Iqbal et al. (2023), who noted that trust plays a vital role in shaping positive consumer attitudes, especially when consumers perceive the influencer as transparent and well-intentioned. On TikTok, where most users fall into the 18–35 age range, trust becomes even more relevant. This younger demographic is typically more open to endorsements from influencers they feel are relatable. Pittman and Abell (2021) argue that relatability often outweighs fame in determining audience trust, which is particularly true in a platform such as TikTok, where users seek

authenticity and everyday relevance. Thus, the trust variable demonstrates a meaningful contribution to audience attitudes, and the hypothesis is supported.

However, perceived behavioral control does not show a significant influence on attitudes toward influencers, with a coefficient value of 0.0446. This supports the findings of Gayatri and Bertrand (2022), who found insufficient evidence to suggest that behavioral control directly shapes consumer attitudes. Instead, variables such as content appeal, value alignment, and emotional engagement appear to be more influential. Respondent data support this view, with 29.4% citing content as the most critical factor in product purchase decisions, surpassing considerations like price and user reviews. The inconsistency perceived by audiences undermines the positive impact of behavioral control, leading to a lack of support for this hypothesis.

In comparison, subjective norms demonstrate a statistically significant influence on attitudes toward influencers, with a coefficient of 0.000. This result is in agreement with Varni et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of perceived social pressure in shaping individual behavior. Influencers can establish what is socially acceptable by promoting popular behaviors, thereby prompting their audiences to align with these perceived norms. As Hegner et al. (2017) explain, subjective norms formed by close social groups (family, friends, and communities) are influential in shaping individuals' perceptions of influencers. This is particularly relevant among TikTok's younger users, who are highly responsive to peer-driven cues. Alfinadi (2023) also confirms that individuals are likely to emulate those they deem influential in their environment, while Religia et al. (2023) highlight the power of shared community values in amplifying influencer effectiveness. These results validate that subjective norms significantly affect attitudes toward influencers.

In line with this, perceived expertise also proves to be a key determinant of attitudes toward influencers, with a coefficient of 0.000. Faizal Al Fandy and Kusuma Dewi (2023) explain that consumers are more inclined to trust promotional messages from sources they perceive as knowledgeable and skilled. Kim and Yoon (2024) further affirm that influencer expertise positively correlates with product perception. Ramos (2024) supports these claims, stating that perceived expertise distinguishes effective influencers from the rest. When audiences view influencers as competent in product knowledge and communication, their attitudes tend to improve. On TikTok, expertise is often conveyed through instructional content, product reviews, and clear, concise messaging. Therefore, building a reputation as an expert enhances audience trust and contributes positively to influencer perception. This hypothesis is thus accepted.

Similarly, perceived congruence between influencers and their audiences significantly affects attitudes, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.000. Chetioui et al. (2020) argue that higher levels of perceived fit between influencer and consumer increase the likelihood of positive attitudes, with implications for how consumers perceive the endorsed products. On TikTok, where lifestyle and aesthetics play a key role, content relevance greatly influences perceived congruence. Younger audiences, in particular, are more drawn to influencers who represent aspirational lifestyles. This emotional connection enhances perceived fit and, as Mandasari et al. (2020) and Putri Ariasih & Susila Putra (2022) explain, strengthens the influencer-audience relationship. Active interaction through comments or Q&A sessions further elevates the sense of compatibility, thereby improving attitudes toward the influencer. These findings support the acceptance of the hypothesis.

Moreover, the analysis shows that attitudes toward influencers significantly influence brand attitudes, supported by a coefficient of 0.000. This finding aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), as proposed by Chetioui et al. (2020), which suggests that attitudes toward a person or object influence subsequent behaviors and evaluations. When consumers form favorable attitudes toward an influencer, these feelings are often transferred to the brand being promoted. Immanue & S. (2021) and Patmawati & Miswanto (2022) reinforce this conclusion, particularly in the context of beauty products,

while Sari et al. (2023) found similar patterns among TikTok users. Positive influencer perceptions enhance brand trust, relevance, and emotional connection, particularly among younger consumers who dominate TikTok. Therefore, this hypothesis is well-supported by empirical evidence.

Nevertheless, although influencer attitudes impact brand attitudes, they do not translate into purchase intention, as reflected by the non-significant coefficient of 0.563. This suggests that while consumers may appreciate influencers, their actual buying decisions are influenced by deeper considerations. Aprilliani & Aquinia (2024) highlight the role of internal factors such as values and personal preferences in purchase behavior. Respondent feedback from this study supports this, with 34.9% stating they would seek more information before making a purchase. Thus, the hypothesis linking influencer attitude to purchase intention is not supported.

Finally, the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention is also not supported, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.338. This finding aligns with Rosa Ayu Rafika (2019), who argues that purchase decisions are driven more by product quality and practical utility than by emotional attachment to a brand. Consumers often base buying decisions on in-depth evaluations and trusted recommendations rather than brand preference. This is reflected in respondent data, where TikTok Shop was favored due to product quality (19.2%) and accessibility (20.8%) over brand loyalty. Supporting this, Stie et al. (2017) found that functional needs and affordability take precedence over positive brand sentiment. Therefore, this study concludes that brand attitude alone is insufficient to predict purchase intention, and the hypothesis is rejected.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the influence of various psychological and perceptual factors on attitudes toward influencers, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions within the context of TikTok users in Indonesia. The results highlight that while factors such as trust, expertise, congruence, and subjective norms significantly shape positive attitudes toward influencers, perceived credibility and perceived behavioral control do not yield a similar impact. Furthermore, a positive attitude toward influencers significantly enhances brand attitude, yet this does not directly translate into purchase intention. Similarly, while brand attitude is positively associated with influencer engagement, it does not significantly predict consumer purchasing behavior. These findings underscore the growing importance of content relevance, authenticity, and emotional alignment over mere credibility or branding. In the dynamic and user-driven environment of TikTok, consumers appear to rely more on product value and personal evaluation than on influencer characteristics alone. Therefore, marketers are encouraged to prioritize strategic alignment between influencer content and audience values, and to recognize that purchase decisions are increasingly shaped by informed and discerning consumer behavior rather than by brand appeal or influencer status alone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that marketers and brands prioritize content relevance, perceived expertise, and trustworthiness when engaging with influencers on platforms such as TikTok. Collaborations should focus on influencers whose content aligns with the values, interests, and lifestyles of the target audience, as perceived congruence has been shown to significantly influence consumer attitudes. Moreover, building trust through transparent and authentic communication is essential, particularly for younger audiences who value relatability over celebrity status. Influencers should be encouraged to deepen their knowledge of the products they promote, as perceived expertise positively impacts consumer perception and enhances message credibility. Additionally, leveraging subjective norms through strategies that engage peer influence and community interaction can strengthen the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

Furthermore, the results indicate that positive attitudes toward influencers and brands do not necessarily lead to higher purchase intentions, emphasizing the need for marketers to support consumer decision-making with comprehensive, accurate, and persuasive product information. Rather than relying solely on influencer popularity or emotional appeal, marketing strategies should be tailored to accommodate both central and peripheral routes of persuasion. This includes providing clear, functional information about the product alongside engaging content. Campaigns should also consider segmenting audiences based on generational characteristics, particularly given the behavioral patterns of Gen Z and Millennials on TikTok. By integrating these strategic considerations, brands can enhance the authenticity, effectiveness, and impact of influencer-driven promotions in digital marketing environments.

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