



Influencer Credibility and Consumer Usage Decisions in the Imported Skincare Market: Evidence from TikTok Users in Depok, Indonesia

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Abstract. This study examines the influence of influencer credibility on consumer usage decisions in the imported skincare market, focusing on TikTok users in Depok, Indonesia. The rapid growth of short-video platforms has changed how young consumers search for beauty information, evaluate product quality, and decide to use skincare products. TikTok influencers are increasingly viewed as persuasive digital sources because they combine visual demonstrations, personal experience, and interactive communication. This research employed a quantitative explanatory survey involving 168 university students who had viewed imported skincare recommendations from the TikTok account @tasyafarasya. Data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares with SmartPLS 4. The findings show that influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on consumer usage decisions, with a path coefficient of 0.717, a T-statistic of 8.790, a P-value of 0.000, and an R-square of 0.514. These results indicate that credibility explains 51.4% of the variance in students' decisions to use imported skincare products. The study contributes to digital marketing and consumer behavior literature by highlighting the role of credible beauty influencers in shaping skincare consumption decisions within contemporary social commerce and influencer marketing practices contexts.

Keywords: Consumer Usage Decisions; Digital Marketing; Imported Skincare; Influencer Credibility; TikTok.

1. BACKGROUND

The rapid growth of social media has transformed the way consumers search for, evaluate, and decide to use beauty and skincare products. In the digital marketplace, consumers no longer rely solely on traditional advertising or formal product information; instead, they increasingly turn to social media influencers for reviews, demonstrations, tutorials, and personal experiences. Therefore, influencer marketing has become a strategic component of digital marketing because influencers are perceived as more relatable, interactive, and authentic than traditional brand spokespersons (Vrontis et al., 2021). In this context, influencer-generated content plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attention, engagement, and behavioral responses, particularly in product categories that require trust, visual evidence, and experiential evaluation, such as skincare (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Influencer attributes, including trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and parasocial relationships, can significantly influence consumer purchase intentions and decision-making processes (Masuda et al., 2022).

TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential platforms for beauty and skincare marketing due to its short-form video format, algorithmic recommendation system, and highly engaging audiovisual content. Unlike text-based reviews, TikTok allows influencers to showcase skincare products through demonstrations, before-and-after narratives, routines, and direct recommendations. These platform characteristics make TikTok highly effective in

shaping consumer perceptions of product quality and suitability. TikTok influencer marketing is closely linked to followers' hedonic experiences and willingness to follow influencer advice (Barta et al., 2023). Similarly, influencer credibility on TikTok influences trust, purchase intention, loyalty, and recommendation behavior (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024). This suggests that TikTok is not only an entertainment platform but also a persuasive digital marketing environment where influencer credibility can influence consumer decisions.

Influencer credibility is a central concept in understanding how digital recommendations influence consumer behavior. Credibility generally refers to the extent to which an influencer is perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, engaging, and appropriate for the product being endorsed. Influencer credibility is strengthened when there is a fit between the influencer and the product being promoted (Belanche et al., 2021a). Furthermore, a fit between influencers, products, and consumers can lead to favorable product attitudes and stronger behavioral intentions (Belanche et al., 2021b). This is particularly relevant in the skincare market, where consumers tend to be more cautious when choosing products that directly affect their skin condition, appearance, and self-confidence. Therefore, beauty influencers perceived as credible can reduce perceived risks and increase consumer confidence in using skincare products.

The imported skincare market provides an important context for examining influencer credibility. Imported skincare products are often associated with premium quality, international brands, innovation, and a desirable lifestyle. However, the use of imported skincare also involves consumer uncertainty regarding product compatibility, authenticity, safety, and effectiveness. In this context, influencer recommendations can serve as a bridge between product information and consumer trust. Credibility and social media influence trust, perceived quality, and purchase intentions in beauty care products (Hossain et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Liu and Zheng (2024) demonstrated that authenticity, homophily, and influencer information value strengthen parasocial relationships and perceived brand credibility. Thus, influencer credibility is not only a communication attribute but also a psychological mechanism that shapes consumer product evaluations.

Among young consumers, especially college students, TikTok-based beauty recommendations may have a stronger influence, as college students are active social media users and highly exposed to digital trends. Young consumers often use social media to compare brands, seek validation from peers, and follow beauty routines shared by influencers. Influencer characteristics such as credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and informative value are significantly associated with customer engagement and purchase intentions (Ao et al., 2023). Similarly, homophily between influencers and consumers can foster value co-creation and

purchase intentions (Bu et al., 2022). These findings suggest that college students may be more likely to accept influencer recommendations when they perceive similarity, trustworthiness, and relevance between themselves and the influencer.

However, influencer marketing does not always yield positive outcomes. Consumers may become skeptical when influencer endorsements are perceived as exaggerated, commercialized, or inauthentic. Influencer marketing must be understood in nuanced terms because authenticity and trust are important relational resources (Kim & Kim, 2021). Furthermore, excessive endorsements can diminish influencer credibility and weaken purchase intentions (Cheah et al., 2024). This finding is important in the skincare industry because consumers may question whether influencers actually use the products they recommend or are simply promoting them for commercial gain. Therefore, credibility is a key factor in determining whether consumers accept or reject influencer recommendations.

Previous studies have extensively examined influencer marketing in relation to purchase intentions, brand attitudes, engagement, and online brand-related activities. Cheung et al. (2022) found that the characteristics of social media influencers' content influence consumers' online brand-related activities through parasocial relationships and desire identification. Onofrei et al. (2022) also revealed that source credibility, source homophily, and content quality mediate the relationship between social media interactions and purchase intentions. Sardar et al. (2024) noted that consumer engagement mediates the relationship between source credibility, content characteristics, and purchase intentions.

However, most previous studies have focused on purchase intentions rather than actual usage decisions. This distinction is important because intentions reflect psychological tendencies, while usage decisions reflect more concrete behavioral responses. Based on this gap, this study focuses on consumer usage decisions in the imported skincare product market among TikTok users in Depok, Indonesia. Foroughi et al. (2024) highlight the importance of source credibility and content value in explaining followers' purchase intentions toward influencer-endorsed brands, while Ooi et al. (2023) emphasize that influencer credibility shapes attitudes toward the influencer and the advertised product, which, in turn, leads to actual purchase behavior.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an exploratory survey design. An exploratory design is considered appropriate because it not only describes consumer perceptions but also tests the causal relationship between the independent variable, namely

influencer credibility, and the dependent variable, namely consumer usage decisions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The survey method was used because this study requires structured responses from a large number of respondents within a specific population. In this study, the population consisted of college students in Depok who had been exposed to TikTok content about imported skincare products, specifically recommendations from beauty influencers. This design follows the logic of quantitative exploratory research, in which variables are operationalized as measurable indicators and analyzed statistically to test hypotheses.

The sample for this study consisted of respondents who met predetermined criteria. Inclusion criteria were college students living or studying in Depok, active TikTok users, and individuals who had viewed imported skincare recommendation content from TikTok beauty influencers. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on two main constructs: influencer credibility and consumer usage decisions. Influencer credibility was measured using indicators of perceived trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and relevance of influencer recommendations. Consumer usage decisions were measured using indicators of product recognition, information evaluation, trust in using imported skincare, and the decision to use or try a product after exposure to influencer content. Each statement was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This type of instrument allows researchers to collect standardized data that can be processed systematically and statistically.

Data management was carried out through several stages prior to analysis. First, questionnaire responses were checked for completeness and consistency. Incomplete or irrelevant responses were removed from the dataset. Second, responses were coded numerically according to Likert scale categories. Third, the dataset was tabulated and prepared for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and response patterns for each research variable. Data processing in quantitative research requires systematic coding, cleaning, and preparation so that the dataset is suitable for further statistical testing (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS. SEM-PLS was chosen because it is suitable for examining relationships between latent variables and for predictive modeling. The analysis consists of two main stages: outer model evaluation and inner model evaluation. The outer model is used to assess the validity and reliability of measurement indicators through outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and discriminant validity. The inner model is used to assess the strength and significance of the relationship between influencer credibility

and consumer usage decisions through R-square, path coefficients, T-statistics, and P-values. SEM-PLS is appropriate for studies involving latent constructs, non-normal data distributions, and relatively limited sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Context and Influencer Content Profile

This study examines the influence of TikTok influencer credibility on consumer usage decisions in the imported skincare market. The original survey involved 168 respondents to assess the measurement model and structural relationship between influencer credibility and usage decisions. The influencer account used as the empirical context has a strong beauty-related identity on TikTok. Based on research documentation, the account is verified, has approximately 4.5 million followers, and has garnered 230.3 million likes at the time of observation. The content analyzed in this thesis focuses on imported skincare products and includes reviews, demonstrations, first impressions, tutorials, and lifestyle formats. The products reviewed represent several imported skincare categories, including cleansing oils, retinol serums and moisturizers, exfoliating pads, sunscreens, glycolic toners, toners, moisturizers, and facial oils.

Table 1. Influencer Account and Content Context.

Aspect	Description
Account name	Tasya Farasya
Username	@tasyafarasya
Account status	Verified
Followers and likes	Approximately 4.5 million followers and 230.3 million likes at the time of observation
Relevant content categories	Skincare, makeup, lifestyle, tutorials, and product reviews
Imported skincare content observed	Anua cleansing oil, Skintific retinol products, Mediheal peeling pads, L'Oréal sunscreen and glycolic toner, and Haruharu Wonder skincare products
Relevance to the study	The account provides beauty and skincare recommendations that may shape consumers' perceptions and usage decisions.

Respondent Profile

The respondent profile shows that the sample is dominated by female students (129, 76.8%), while 39 respondents (23.2%) were male. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 21 and 23 years old, representing 56.5% of the sample. Respondents aged 17-20 years accounted for 29.2%, while those aged 24-26 years accounted for 14.3%. Meanwhile, 47.0% of respondents live and study in Depok, 33.9% study in Depok, and 19.0% reside in

Depok. Respondents also demonstrated relatively high levels of TikTok usage. The largest group used TikTok frequently, with 67 respondents (39.9%), followed by those who used it quite often (30.4%) and very often (26.2%). Only 3.6% reported infrequent TikTok use.

Table 2. Respondent Demographic Profile (N = 168).

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	39	23.2%
	Female	129	76.8%
Age	17-20 years	49	29.2%
	21-23 years	95	56.5%
	24-26 years	24	14.3%
	Connection with Depok	Lives in Depok	32
	Studies in Depok	57	33.9%
	Lives and studies in Depok	79	47.0%

Table 3. Respondents' TikTok Use and Imported Skincare Experience (N = 168).

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
TikTok usage intensity	Rarely	6	3.6%
	Quite often	51	30.4%
	Often	67	39.9%
	Very often	44	26.2%
Experience with imported skincare	Have used imported skincare	134	79.8%
	Have not used but considered	30	17.9%
	Have not used/considered	4	2.4%

These findings indicate that most respondents have sufficient exposure to TikTok content, including beauty reviews and skincare recommendations. Furthermore, 79.8% of respondents had used imported skincare products, 17.9% had not used them but had considered doing so, and only 2.4% had never used or considered using them. This confirms that imported skincare is not just an abstract product category for respondents, but one with which most have direct or potential consumption experience.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed using outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and discriminant validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Results showed that all retained indicators had outer loading values above 0.60. The influencer credibility construct had six indicators, with loadings ranging from 0.636 to 0.821. The consumer usage decision construct had three indicators, with loadings ranging from 0.778 to 0.862. Although several indicators fell within the 0.60-0.70 range, they were retained because their overall construct validity and reliability statistics met acceptable criteria for exploratory and predictive SEM-PLS analysis.

Table 4. Measurement Model Results.

Construct	Indicator	Value	Interpretation
Influencer credibility	X1_11	0.821	Valid loading
	X1_15	0.662	Valid loading
	X1_16	0.656	Valid loading
	X1_3	0.781	Valid loading
	X1_4	0.636	Valid loading
	X1_7	0.675	Valid loading
	Consumer usage decisions	Y1_13	0.778
Y1_2		0.806	Valid loading
Y1_9		0.862	Valid loading
Influencer credibility	AVE	0.502	Convergent validity achieved
Consumer usage decisions	AVE	0.666	Convergent validity achieved
Influencer credibility	Cronbach's alpha / CR	0.801 / 0.857	Reliable
Consumer usage decisions	Cronbach's alpha / CR	0.750 / 0.857	Reliable
Construct pair	HTMT	0.896	Discriminant validity achieved

The AVE value for influencer credibility was 0.502, slightly above the recommended threshold of 0.50, while the AVE value for consumer usage decision was 0.666. These values indicate that each construct has adequate convergent validity. Reliability is also supported, as influencer credibility has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.801 and a composite reliability of 0.857, while consumer usage decisions have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.750 and a composite reliability of 0.857. These values indicate that the items are internally consistent in measuring their respective constructs. The HTMT value for the relationship between influencer credibility and consumer usage decisions is 0.896, which falls below the 0.90 criterion. This indicates that discriminant validity has been achieved.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R-square), path coefficient, t-statistics, and p-value. The R-square value for consumer usage decisions was 0.514. This means that influencer credibility explained 51.4% of the variance in consumer usage decisions toward imported skincare products. The remaining 48.6% may be explained by factors outside the model, such as price, brand image, perceived product quality, skin compatibility, product safety, peer reviews, brand trust, promotional intensity, and prior usage experience.

Table 5. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Relationship / Endogenous Variable	Coefficient / R-square	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
Influencer credibility → Consumer usage decisions	0.717	8.790	0.000	Supported
Consumer usage decisions	R-square = 0.514	-	-	Moderate explanatory power

The hypothesis-testing results indicate a positive, significant effect of influencer credibility on consumer usage decisions. The path coefficient was 0.717, indicating a strong positive relationship. The t-statistic was 8.790, which exceeded the critical value of 1.96, and the p-value was 0.000, indicating statistical significance at the 5% level. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported: TikTok influencer credibility positively and significantly influences university students' decisions to use imported skincare products in Depok, Indonesia.

4. DISCUSSION

The research results show that the credibility of TikTok influencers strongly influences college students' decisions to use imported skincare products. These findings suggest that the higher students' perceptions of an influencer's credibility, the more likely they are to use or consider using the recommended imported skincare products. In this context, credibility is not solely about popularity or number of followers, but primarily about the extent to which the influencer is perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and able to convey messages in an engaging and relevant manner.

This finding aligns with the theory of source credibility, which explains that persuasive messages are more effective when delivered by sources perceived as trustworthy, competent, and engaging. In the case of skincare products, credibility is crucial because consumers are not simply purchasing symbolic products, but rather products directly related to skin health, appearance, self-confidence, and daily routines. Imported skincare products often raise concerns about authenticity, compatibility with local skin types, ingredient safety, pricing, and claimed benefits. Therefore, credible influencers can help reduce consumer uncertainty through explanations, demonstrations of use, reviews of personal experiences, and presentation of easy-to-understand information.

An R-square value of 0.514 indicates that influencer credibility explains 51.4% of the variation in usage decisions. This figure is significant because it indicates that more than half of students' decisions to use imported skincare can be explained by influencer credibility. This

confirms that, in a highly visual, experience-based product category like skincare, consumer decisions are heavily influenced by how they perceive the influencer delivering the message. TikTok, as a short-video platform, allows influencers to demonstrate product texture, application instructions, before-and-after results, and personal responses to the product. This visual presentation makes information more concrete, emotional, and convincing.

Influencer credibility can be understood through three main dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Trustworthiness relates to the perception that influencers are honest, sincere, and not solely promoting products for commercial gain. For imported skincare products, this aspect is crucial because consumers often question whether recommendations are truly based on experience or simply part of a paid collaboration. Expertise relates to the influencer's ability to explain product ingredients, functions, usage instructions, and suitability for specific skin types. Meanwhile, attractiveness refers not only to physical appearance but also to communication style, visual clarity, confidence, and emotional connection with the audience.

Furthermore, TikTok cannot be understood solely as a message distribution channel but rather as a communication environment that influences consumer decisions. Algorithmic features, the For You Page, comments, likes, shares, and saved content reinforce the persuasion process through electronic word of mouth. Students watching skincare reviews can read other users' comments, compare experiences, save videos, or receive repeated exposure to similar content. These interactions can strengthen or weaken trust in influencer recommendations. Thus, influencer credibility and e-WOM work hand in hand to shape consumer confidence.

The practical implication of these findings is that imported skincare brands should not select influencers solely on the basis of follower count. Brands need to consider the fit between influencers, products, and audience needs. Influencers who are knowledgeable about skincare, transparent about collaborations, and able to provide realistic information will be more effective at driving usage decisions. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of source credibility theory in the context of TikTok-based digital marketing. This study also contributes by addressing not only purchase intentions but also more concrete usage decisions. However, because the model explains only 51.4% of the variance in decisions, future research could include additional variables such as product quality, country-of-origin image, brand trust, price, skin suitability, influencer authenticity, parasocial interactions, and e-WOM.

5. CONCLUSION

The empirical results show that perceived credibility significantly influences college students' decisions to use imported skincare products, as indicated by a positive path coefficient of 0.717, a t-statistic of 8.790, and a p-value of 0.000. This finding suggests that the more credible a beauty influencer is perceived to be, the more likely the audience is to accept the recommendation and translate it into a decision to use imported skincare products. The model's explanatory power further strengthens this conclusion. The R-square value of 0.514 indicates that influencer credibility explains 51.4% of the variance in consumer usage decisions. This indicates that credibility is not a marginal factor in TikTok-based skincare marketing, but rather a substantial determinant of how young consumers evaluate and respond to imported skincare recommendations. This finding also confirms that TikTok is an important digital marketing environment for beauty and skincare products. Therefore, consumer purchasing decisions in the imported skincare market are shaped by perceived influencer credibility and TikTok's persuasive qualities as a digital communication platform.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. It focused on college students in Depok and examined one TikTok beauty influencer as the primary empirical context. Therefore, these findings may not be fully representative of all consumer groups, regions, social media platforms, or influencer types. Future research is recommended to include additional variables such as brand trust, perceived product quality, country-of-origin image, e-WOM, parasocial interactions, perceived authenticity, price fairness, and skin compatibility. Comparative research across platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube would also provide a broader understanding of how influencer credibility operates across different digital marketing environments.

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