

“Exploring the impact of influencers’ characteristics on the cosmetics purchase intentions of TikTok users”

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCERS' CHARACTERISTICS ON THE COSMETICS PURCHASE INTENTIONS OF TIKTOK USERS

Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed marketing strategies, with influencer marketing emerging as a powerful tool for consumer engagement. Particularly in the cosmetics business, TikTok has become well-known as a major platform where influencers influence buying habits. Given the increasing reliance on influencer recommendations, understanding the key characteristics that drive purchase intentions is crucial for businesses aiming to optimize their marketing strategies. This study investigates the impact of TikTok influencers' characteristics, such as physical attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and interactivity, on Vietnamese consumers' cosmetics purchase intentions. Grounded in social learning theory, the research explores how users observe and emulate influencers' behaviors in their decision-making process. A mixed-method approach was adopted, beginning with qualitative interviews with 20 TikTok users to identify key influencer attributes affecting purchase decisions. This was followed by a quantitative survey of 312 Vietnamese TikTok users with prior experience purchasing cosmetics. The study employed statistical analyses, including correlation and regression tests, to determine the significance of influencer characteristics on purchase intention. The study revealed notable gender differences in cosmetics purchasing motivations, with women showing a higher propensity to purchase due to their greater engagement with these products. The attractiveness of influencers is the strongest predictor of purchase intention, followed by trustworthiness, and interactivity, whereas expertise does not play a critical role. These insights provide valuable implications for cosmetic brands, emphasizing the importance of selecting visually appealing influencers while maintaining credibility and audience engagement.

Keywords

TikTok, social media influencers, influencers characteristics, physical attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, interactivity, purchase intention, cosmetics industry

JEL Classification

M31, M37, D12

INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has ushered in a new era of technology integration, driven primarily by the Internet's advancement. This digital transformation is reshaping all aspects of social life, from business operations to problem-solving approaches. Currently, more than 53% of the global population actively uses social networking platforms (Kemp, 2022). Vietnam has emerged as a significant player in this digital landscape, ranking 12th worldwide for projected social media user growth between 2021 and 2026 (Ngoc Nguyen, 2022).

The Internet's rapid growth has transformed social media into a new digital realm where people gather and connect. These platforms serve as powerful tools for businesses to engage with customers while increasing brand visibility and reducing advertising costs (Irbo & Mohammed, 2020). Major platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook offer significant opportunities for companies, especially since their target customers spend substantial time on these platforms.

Companies increasingly turn to influencers marketing for its accessibility, broad reach, quick communication, and cost advantage over traditional celebrity endorsement (Jarrar et al., 2020). As TikTok grows, businesses are partnering with influencers for visual product endorsements, achieving positive results in both revenue and brand perception. Research shows that influencers significantly affect brand image, self-concept, and purchase intention (Quian & Park, 2021). Studies also indicate that balanced positive and negative product reviews tend to generate more favorable consumer attitudes (Johansen & Guldvik, 2017).

Influencer impact can be both positive and negative, especially for vulnerable groups like adolescents and young adults. Curtis et al.'s (2018) research on alcohol-related influencer content found a clear connection between viewer engagement and increased alcohol consumption. The choice of influencers for partnerships greatly affects a company's success, making it essential for marketers to select individuals who can authentically communicate brand messages.

Cosmetics play a daily role in enhancing natural beauty and maintaining skin health. Since these products have direct skin contact, quality is paramount. Regular use of low quality and counterfeit products can harm the skin and worsen existing conditions. While consumers frequently turn to influencer endorsements and social media reviews for product guidance (Le et al., 2024), not all reviews are reliable. Some promote counterfeit products deceptively, misleading consumers with serious consequence. Given cosmetics' direct health impact, evaluating influencer credibility is crucial for making informed product choices.

Despite influencers considerable impact on customers, particularly in cosmetics, and TikTok's emergence as a leading platform, effective strategies for optimizing TikTok influencer marketing remains unclear. Additionally, since most research focuses on international contexts, findings may not reflect domestic consumer behaviors. This study therefore aims to explore the impact of influencers' characteristics on the cosmetics purchase intentions of TikTok users.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Social learning theory posits that individuals learn and shape their behavior through observation, modeling, and imitation of others within their social environment (Bandura & Walters, 1977). In the context of TikTok, this theory suggests that users, especially younger individuals, observe the behaviors, preferences, and consumption patterns of influencers they follow. Applying this theory, users may adopt certain purchasing behaviors, preferences for specific cosmetic products, or even attitudes toward brands, based on what they observe from influencers they follow on TikTok. The influencers' demonstrations of using or endorsing certain cosmetics can influence users' perceptions of those products and their intentions to purchase them.

Social learning theory also underscores the role of identification and vicarious learning. People tend to imitate influencers whom they perceive as simi-

lar to themselves. When followers see their own demographics, lifestyle, or values reflected in an influencer, they are more likely to adopt that influencer's recommendations and choices. Social learning theory thus helps explain how TikTok influencers shape consumption patterns and purchasing decisions.

Recent marketing and consumer behavior research has increasingly focused on influencers' role in shaping purchase intentions (Flecha-Ortiz et al., 2023; Kurdi et al., 2022; Nofela & Saputri, 2022). Particularly on TikTok, influencers have become crucial drivers of consumer decision-making.

Fakhreddin and Foroudi (2022) established that influencers serve as opinion leaders who can shape their audience's preferences and behaviors. Their recommendations, endorsements, and content significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions for promoted products and services (Barta et al., 2023).

Research demonstrates that influencer characteristics are vital in shaping purchase intentions (Kurdi et al., 2022; Le et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024). Key factors like communication style, reliability, credibility, respect, and attractiveness directly affect how consumers perceive and respond to promoted products. When consumers view influencers as credible and trustworthy, they are more inclined to value their recommendations and consider purchases. The characteristics and perceived personas of digital influencers enhance both credibility and shopping experience, which in turn affects consumer purchase decisions (Pereira et al., 2023). Social learning theory further explains influencer marketing's effectiveness (Liu, 2021). The theory posits that people learn by observing and imitating others. When consumers see influencers endorsing products, it validates and encourages similar purchasing behavior.

The readiness of a consumer to embrace shared information is termed attractiveness, correlating with an influencer's heightened appeal on social media. When consumers encounter a product endorsed by a well-known and likable influencer while browsing social media, it instantly influences their spending behavior positively (Li et al., 2012). This prompts consumers to consider purchasing the promoted goods as their focus shifts to the brand. Furthermore, attractive influencers possess a greater ability to influence customers' perceptions compared to less visually appealing ones (Dogra, 2019).

Due to their enduring associations with influencers, consumers may perceive expertise as the influencers' ability to generate precise and trustworthy content (Nejad et al., 2014). Kapitan and Silvera (2016) suggested that influencers' credibility grows when consumers believe they possess extensive knowledge across various product categories, such as cosmetics. Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2019) explored the effectiveness of influencers in online events for luxury fashion brands. They identified expertise as a crucial factor in determining brand satisfaction, brand image, and brand trust. These factors, in turn, help clarify the impact on consumers' purchase intentions.

Lv et al. (2015) asserted that consumers tend to follow the recommendations of influencers they trust

because the influencers' expertise adds credibility to their advice. This explains why companies are meticulous in choosing influencers to endorse their products: they aim to create the most significant impact on their target audience. Park and Lin (2020) investigated the attitudes of Chinese consumers toward live streaming shopping hosted by internet celebrities. In the digital era, streaming media platforms have gained immense popularity. The findings revealed that the perceived trustworthiness of internet celebrities positively influenced consumers' purchase intentions.

Market mavens typically possess a wealth of information across various products, engaging comfortably in intimate conversations and readily responding to market inquiries (Yoon, 2018). Xiao et al. (2018) emphasized that individuals' ability to interact with a source significantly influences their perception of online information's authenticity. In this context, interactivity denotes the extent to which social media influencers engage in two-way communication with their audiences (Xiao et al., 2018). Social media platforms offer an ideal space for seamless sharing and discussions among users. Feick and Price (1987) coined the term 'market maven' to illustrate influential figures shaping others' investment decisions, exemplifying the influencer's role in today's social media landscape.

Based on the above discussion, the social learning theory explains how individuals learn and shape their behavior by observing and imitating others within their social environment. In the context of TikTok, influencers play a key role in shaping users' preferences and purchasing behaviors by endorsing certain products, especially when users identify with them. Influencer characteristics like attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and interactivity significantly impact consumers' purchase intentions, as they tend to trust and mimic influencers who are credible, knowledgeable, and relatable. This highlights the growing influence of social media influencers in shaping consumer behavior.

Grounded in social learning theory, this study aims to investigate the impact of TikTok influencers' characteristics on the cosmetics purchase intentions of Vietnamese consumers.

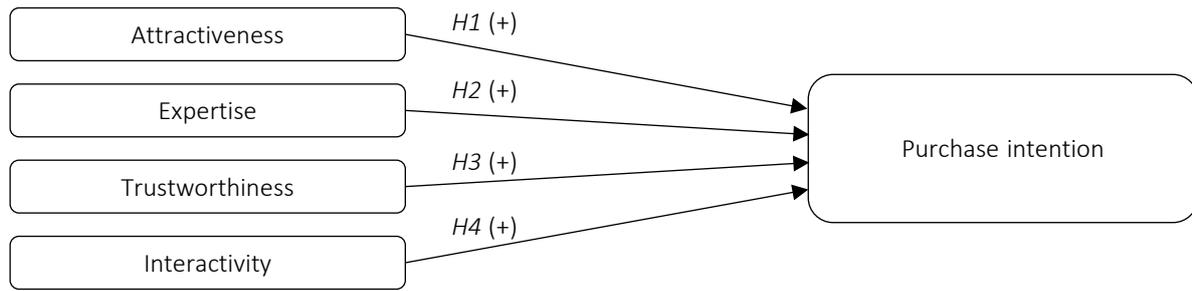


Figure 1. Research model

An extensive review of previous literature and prior empirical works support to the following hypotheses:

- H1: The attractiveness of TikTok influencers positively influences purchase intention.*
- H2: The expertise of TikTok influencers positively influences purchase intention.*
- H3: The trustworthiness of TikTok influencers positively influences purchase intention.*
- H4: The interactivity of TikTok influencers positively influences purchase intention.*

The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method design, starting with qualitative research in phase one, followed by quantitative research in phase two.

2.1. Qualitative method

Qualitative method can explore users' thoughts and understand their underlying motivations for online purchasing behavior. This study involved in-depth interviews with 20 Vietnamese TikTok users who showed interest in cosmetic products. These interviewees were recruited through convenience sampling, with participants voluntarily joining from among the research team's friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. In accordance with Marshall et al. (2015), the sample size of 20 participants was determined sufficient to reach data saturation. Following an introduction to the topic and the interview's objectives,

the questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first encompassed general and familiar categories such as TikTok and influencers, while the second focused on specific aspects related to cosmetic products and purchasing intentions. Before responding, interviewees were given time to view content from 4 TikTok influencers known for reviewing cosmetic products. This allowed them to gain initial insights into the interview topic. The qualitative questions were as follows:

1. What attracts audiences to watch review clips of TikTok influencers?
2. What makes audiences believe in TikTok influencers' reviews?
3. How do TikTok influencers affect audiences' intention to buy?

2.2. Quantitative method

Quantitative (causal) research was used to investigate the causal relationship between TikTok influencers' attributes and the purchase intentions of TikTok followers. According to Bell et al. (2022), causal research explores the cause-and-effect relationships between the variables under study. This study considered influencers' attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and interactivity as independent variables, while the dependent variable was the purchase intention, measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Demographic factors such as age, gender, income, occupancy were also examined. The study collected data via online and telephonic surveys using questionnaires. Questionnaires are a popular technique for data collection in consumer behavior and social media research (Le et al., 2024).

Following the guidance of Hair (2011), the measurement approach for this study was consistent with prior research but tailored to the current focus on TikTok influencers, and used influencer characteristics from previous studies: attractiveness and expertise from Dang (2021) and trustworthiness, interactivity, and purchase intention from Botelho (2019), Singh and Banerjee (2018), and Xiao et al. (2018). Table 1 shows the measurement items and constructs.

- attractiveness (4 items);
- expertise (4 items);
- trustworthiness (3 items);
- interactivity (4 items);
- purchase intention (4 items).

According to Hair et al. (1998), a sufficient sample size typically ranges from 100 to 150 responses. This study exceeded this requirement by collecting data from Hanoi residents aged 18-30 who were TikTok users. To ensure participant eligibility, the survey included a screening question: “Do

you use TikTok?”. In the absence of a suitable sampling frame, the study employed snowball sampling, where initial participants shared the online questionnaire with qualified participants in their networks.

Of the 312 usable responses, females comprised the majority with 235 (75.3%) respondents, while males accounted for 77 (24.7%). The age distribution showed 195 participants (62.5%) were 18-22 years old, with the remaining 117 (37.5%) in the 23-30 age group. Regarding monthly income, 55.1% earned under 5,000,000 VND, 22.8% earned between 10,000,000 and 20,000,000 VND, 12.8% earned between 5,000,000 and 10,000,000 VND, and 9.3% earned above 20,000,000 VND. These income patterns reflected the sample’s occupational composition: students formed the largest group (58.3%), followed by full-time workers (32.1%), freelancers (6.1%), and part-time workers (3.5%). Table 2 presents a comprehensive overview of these demographic characteristics.

Table 1. Summary of constructs and measurement items

Constructs	Coding	Items	Source
Attractiveness	AT1	I like seeking out products on the recommendations of TikTok influencers with beautiful faces and smooth skins	Dang (2021)
	AT2	I like seeking products on the recommendations of an elegant TikTok influencer	
	AT3	I like seeking products on the recommendations of digital influencers with a classy style	
	AT4	I like seeking products on the recommendations of digital influencers with a sexy style	
Expertise	EX1	TikTok influencers are knowledgeable about the product	Dang (2021)
	EX2	TikTok influencers are qualified, with certificates relevant to cosmetics	
	EX3	TikTok influencers are experienced in using a variety of facial care products	
	EX4	TikTok influencers are skilled at using cosmetics properly and well; for example, makeup skills, using cosmetics for facials and skincare	
Trustworthiness	TW1	My favorite TikTok influencer is trustworthy	Botelho (2019), Singh and Banerjee (2018) and Xiao et al. (2018)
	TW2	My favorite social media influencer is reliable	
	TW3	I think a TikTok influencer is a dependable person when recommending a product	
Interactivity	IR1	It is easy to contact my favorite TikTok influencer	Botelho (2019), Singh and Banerjee (2018) and Xiao et al. (2018)
	IR2	My favorite TikTok influencer is willing to interact with me	
	IR3	My favorite TikTok influencer is influenced by me	
	IR4	My favorite TikTok influencer interacts with me frequently	
Purchase intention	PI1	Products recommended by TikTok influencers caught my attention	Botelho (2019), Singh and Banerjee (2018) and Xiao et al. (2018)
	PI2	Products recommended by TikTok influencers affect my purchase intentions	
	PI3	I bought this product because my favorite TikTok influencers recommended it	
	PI4	I bought this product because I trust the recommendations in the product reviews by TikTok influencers	

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents (n = 12)

	Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-22	195	62.5%
	23-30	117	37.5%
Gender	Male	77	24.7%
	Female	235	75.3%
Income	Under 5,000,000 VND	172	55.1%
	5,000,000 VND - 10,000,000 VND	40	2.8%
	10,000,000 VND - 20,000,000 VND	71	22.8%
	Above 20,000,000 VND	29	9.3%
Occupation status	Student	182	58.3%
	Freelancer	19	6.1%
	Part-time	11	3.5%
	Full-time	100	32.1%
	Total	312	100%

3. RESULTS

The qualitative approach in this study involved interviewing 20 individuals aged 18 to 30 years, residing in Hanoi. Respondents’ answers were transcribed to create documents for text analysis. Initially, the authors created word clouds to discern the dominant themes in the respondents’ replies. The word clouds visually depicted the most frequently mentioned keywords in the research.

Overall, Blingbabi, representing attractiveness, garnered the most mentions, followed by Linh – an influencer’s name – representing trustworthiness. Meanwhile, Tuan Anh (for expertise) and Ngan Hua (for interactivity) occupied smaller sections in the word cloud. This outcome aligns with expectations, as words like ‘beautiful,’ ‘attractive,’ and ‘pretty’ are readily identifiable, primarily associated with attractiveness. Other terms related to Interactivity, such as ‘talkative,’ were also used, though in fewer numbers compared to those for attractiveness. Certain words like ‘ingredient,’ ‘features,’ ‘trustworthy,’ ‘check,’ and ‘verified’ were

frequently mentioned. However, attributing these words specifically to trustworthiness or expertise was challenging. Consequently, the authors conducted detailed analyses of the responses to each question to ascertain the intended meanings behind these words.

To thoroughly analyze each question, the authors assigned individual keywords to specific terms. In essence, by comprehending the context of each word, the authors inferred a representative term for each. Grouping these under one term allowed the authors to identify the most frequently mentioned terms in each question or section. Table 3 presents the results of the qualitative research.

The initial findings highlighted the significance of appearance in the initial phase of communication, serving as a crucial factor in capturing the audience’s attention at first glance. When recalling TikTok influencers, respondents predominantly described their initial impressions with words like ‘confident,’ ‘gentle,’ and ‘elegant.’ This emphasizes the influential role of attractiveness in the minds of TikTok users.

Table 3. Words mentioned by interviewees in qualitative interviews

Terms mentioned	Appearance	Trustworthy	Expertise/ knowledge	Interactive content
Expertise, kind, trustworthy	–	3	3	3
Attractive, intelligent, charismatic	6	–	1	–
Attractive, confident	6	–	–	–
Attractive, confident, gentle, and elegant	12	–	–	–
Talkative	–	–	–	3
Confident, talkative	3	–	–	3
Trustworthy, expertise	–	3	3	–
Expertise, dynamic	–	–	3	3

Additionally, respondents mentioned the importance of ‘trustworthiness evidence,’ particularly about cosmetics. They emphasized aspects such as ‘beautiful skin,’ ‘diverse content covering all product aspects,’ and comprehensive information on origins and ingredients. These factors significantly influenced respondents’ preferences. For instance, Ha Linh, representing trustworthiness among influencers, was remembered for her straightforward, detailed, and decisive reviews. These qualities were perceived as ‘easy to understand,’ and provided clear evidence.

In comparison to ‘expertise,’ trustworthiness cues, such as numerous reviews, endorsements by renowned figures, and easily verifiable information, were mentioned more frequently than expertise-related aspects, such as ingredient analysis or scientific certifications. This suggests that within the short duration of TikTok videos (under 1 minute each), users tend to favor easily understandable and logical information over detailed knowledge.

Another notable finding was that most respondents expressed a ‘purchase intention’ after watching influencers’ TikTok videos. However, there was a lack of immediate motivation for immediate purchases. This suggests a potential area for future research, focusing on strategies to convert ‘purchase intention’ into actual purchase actions.

Next, a quantitative survey was conducted. Prior to hypotheses testing, a thorough examination of the internal consistency of the measurement scales was required. Table 4 presents the Cronbach’s alpha values, used as the primary statistic in the reliability analysis. The Cronbach’s alpha should ex-

ceed 0.70 for acceptable measures (Hair, 2011). All variables exhibited Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from 0.772 to 0.928, exceeding the 0.70 threshold. Hence, all variables demonstrated internal consistency and reliability.

To determine whether there were genuine differences in purchase intention between men and women, an independent sample test was conducted. The outcomes of the independent t-test are presented in Table 5. A significant difference emerged between males (N = 77, M = 2.490, SD = 0.639) and females (N = 235, M = 2.654, SD = 0.516), $t = -0.228$, $p\text{-value} = 0.024 < 0.05$. This outcome indicated that females exhibited a higher inclination to purchase cosmetics on TikTok than did males.

Table 6 shows positive Pearson correlation values. Notably, the trustworthiness and expertise correlation was close to 1.00, indicating a strong, close, linear relationship. The significance (2-tailed) values presented in Table 6 indicate that all the p-values were below 0.05. This signifies the significance and meaningfulness of these variables for statistical purposes, confirming their linear correlation.

The appropriate measurement scale for a linear regression model is the determination coefficient, R^2 (R-squared). However, in SPSS, the adjusted R^2 is considered more accurate than R^2 as it does not necessarily change with the addition of more independent variables to the regression. Table 7 presents the findings of the model summary.

Table 7 indicates that the adjusted R^2 for the third model had the greatest value (0.345), meaning that the three independent factors of attractiveness,

Table 4. Reliability of variables

Variable	Item	Cronbach’s α	Lowest item-total correlation value	Highest Cronbach’s α if item deleted
Attractiveness	4	0.843	0.589	0.838
Expertise	4	0.855	0.584	0.854
Trustworthiness	3	0.928	0.792	0.895
Interactivity	4	0.905	0.693	0.901
Purchase intention	4	0.772	0.506	0.751

Table 5. Compare mean results by gender

Demographic	Characteristic	Mean	Std	t	p-value
Gender	Male	2.490	0.639	-0.228	0.024
	Female	2.654	0.516		

Table 6. Analyzing correlations between variables

Variables	AT	EX	TW	IT	PI
Attractiveness (AT)	1	–	–	–	–
Expertise (EX)	0.367*	1	–	–	–
Trustworthiness (TW)	0.324*	0.739*	1	–	–
Interactivity (IT)	0.435*	0.407*	0.412*	1	–
Purchase intention (PI)	0.507*	0.416*	0.441*	0.386*	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

Table 7. Model summary (method used: stepwise)

Model	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std	Durbin-Watson
Model 1: Attractiveness	0.257	0.255	0.477	–
Model 2: Attractiveness, trustworthiness	0.342	0.338	0.449	–
Model 3: Attractiveness, trustworthiness, interactivity	0.352	0.345	0.447	2.128

Dependent variable: purchase intention

Table 8. Coefficients in regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		t-value	p-value	VIF
	Coefficients	Std			
(Constant)	0.954	0.134	7.134	0.000	
Attractiveness	0.310	0.043	7.134	0.000	1.273
Trustworthiness	0.212	0.039	5.370	0.000	1.243
Interactivity	0.083	0.040	2.095	0.037	1.372

Dependent variable: purchase intention

trustworthiness, and interactivity had the most influence on the dependent variable. Model 3 explained 34.5% of the change in purchase intention. In other words, these 3 variables affected 34.5% of the change in the dependent variable, while the remaining 68.6% was due to variables outside the model, and random error.

Table 8 presents an evaluation of whether the regression coefficients of each independent variable in the model were statistically significant based on the t-test. Clearly, all p-values in the test were below 0.05, indicating that these variables significantly impacted the dependent variable. The assessment of VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) showed no violation of the multicollinearity assumption, as all VIF values were below 3. Based on the regression coefficients, regression equations could be constructed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Purchase Intention} = & 0.954 \\
 & + 0.310 \cdot \text{Attractiveness} \\
 & + 0.212 \cdot \text{Trustworthiness} \\
 & + 0.083 \cdot \text{Interactivity}.
 \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

In these findings, firstly, the positive regression coefficient indicated that independent variables positively influenced the dependent variable. As the independent variable increased, so did the dependent variable. Secondly, based on the sequence, this study indicates that attractiveness is the most essential motivators for consumers' purchase intention compared to other variables. Approximately 31.0% of the variance in purchase intention was accounted for by attractiveness, followed by trustworthiness (21.2%) and interactivity (8.3%), respectively.

Table 9. Excluded variable

Variable	Beta	t	p-value	Partial correlation	VIF
Expertise	0.072	1.032	0.303	0.059	2.322

Dependent variable: purchase intention

It is essential to note the absence of the expertise variable, as indicated in the table below. The excluded variable was tested in three scenarios (using the stepwise method) by excluding reliable variables to determine the model with an unacceptable p-value.

In summary, the result showed that three hypotheses were accepted (*H1*, *H3*, *H4*) while *H2* was rejected.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings initially indicated a noteworthy impact of attractiveness on the purchasing intention of TikTok users. However, this outcome contradicted Ohanian's (1990) research, which suggested that attractiveness was not a significant predictor of consumer purchasing intention. Studies by Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) and Lim et al. (2017) also supported Ohanian's findings. In contrast, several researchers, including Wongweeranonchai (2016), Priyankara et al. (2017), and Khalid and Yasmeeen (2019), emphasized the pivotal role of attractiveness in amplifying consumer purchasing intention. For instance, Kalu's (2019) study demonstrated that the appealing physical appearance of social media influencers notably influenced the purchasing decisions of Irish male millennials. Although these findings offer substantial evidence in the beauty and cosmetics industry and other related studies, they lack focus on specific areas, industries, or platforms. Consequently, the extent to which the attractiveness of TikTok influencers affects consumer purchases may significantly differ, representing a limitation of these studies

This study also examined the hypothesis that the trustworthiness of TikTok influencers significantly impacts consumers' purchasing intentions. This hypothesis aligns with several past studies conducted by Kurdi et al. (2022), Abdurrahman et al. (2018), and Singh and Banerjee (2018), all asserting the substantial influence of trustworthiness on consumers. However, contradictory findings have emerged. It is possible that there might be disparities in beliefs between TikTok users and those of other

social media platforms. Considering TikTok's rapid growth during COVID-19, the platform's developers recognized the crucial need to rigorously control information to prevent the spread of negative or misleading content about COVID-19 and health-related topics. Given that cosmetic products fall under health-related topics, they may also be subject to strict scrutiny, reinforcing the importance of trustworthiness for TikTok users.

The impact of expertise on consumers' purchase intentions appears negligible. While Ohanian's (1990) study contradicts this, similar outcomes were found by Lim et al. (2017), who highlighted that users' skepticism toward social media influencers' product credibility often stems from doubts about their expertise. Interviews might shed light on why expertise is undervalued among TikTok users. TikTok's short video format restricts in-depth expertise sharing (15 seconds to under 1 minute). Additionally, Vietnamese millennials and Gen-Z can self-educate using platforms like Facebook and Google Blog. Respondents prioritized trustworthiness over expertise. This raises questions: How can we differentiate trustworthiness and expertise? Can longer TikTok videos explaining product expertise boost user confidence?

Regarding interactivity, this study suggests that observation of TikTok influencers holds minimal sway over consumers' purchasing decisions. This aligns with the findings of Kurdi et al. (2022), indicating social media interactivity's impact on advertising campaign effectiveness. Planchard (2016) highlighted that audience-influencer interaction fosters positive relationships and aids consumers in decision-making. TikTok, recognized for its interactive nature, promotes engaging content via its algorithm. This coincides with Sepp et al.'s (2011) notion that internet sharing should prioritize interactive information exchange.

These findings align with previous studies, emphasizing the impact of attractiveness on purchasing intention, in line with Weismueller et al. (2020), Yuan and Lou (2020), and Anwar and Gayathri (2020). They collectively emphasize the significance of an article's attractiveness – be it

through influencers, content, or visuals – in influencing consumer buying decisions. Similarly, the results affirm the link between trustworthiness, interactivity, and purchasing intention noted by Weismueller et al. (2020). Past studies by Priyankara et al. (2017), and Khalid and Yasmeen (2019) also support the positive impact of attractiveness on purchase intentions. This study also reinforces the roles of trustworthiness and interactivity in explaining purchase intentions, consistent with earlier research on trustworthiness by Kok Wei and Li (2013), and interactivity by Glucksman (2017). However, the significance of expertise contradicts the findings of Rossiter and Smidts (2012). Despite these discrepancies, this study offers a diverse view of how TikTok users respond to purchasing intentions, particularly in the cosmetics industry.

This research explored demographic variations in the intention to purchase cosmetics endorsed by TikTok influencers, using an independent

samples t-test with 312 respondents. The findings indicated a noteworthy gender-based difference, with females showing a higher inclination to purchase cosmetic products. This result aligns with Manchanda et al. (2022), who characterized women beauty vlog followers as “first true digital natives”.

Future research should address several shortcomings of the study. First, the sample was primarily college students aged 18-22, which may limit the applicability of the study. Second, this technique ignores message quality and content structure, which influence content effectiveness. To better understand the relationship between expertise and purchase intention, future research should consider other determinants and mediators. This study focused on TikTok, ignoring Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, which currently have similar capabilities to TikTok, further hindering the analysis of influencer effectiveness across platforms.

CONCLUSION

This study uses social learning theory to determine how TikTok influencers' attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and interactivity impact their users' intention to purchase cosmetics products. The results confirmed that influencer attractiveness is the best predictor of purchase intention, suggesting that social media recommendations may be more about visual appeal than knowledge. This study also showed that social learning theory is suitable to explain how consumers' purchase behaviors are shaped by observing influencers on TikTok, highlighting the role of identification and imitation in the decision-making process.

The research findings offer several managerial implications. While women's greater interest in cosmetics purchases compared to men is unsurprising, our findings reveal important insights about other demographic factors. Companies should create gender-specific marketing strategies since women exhibit more desire in buying cosmetics. Promos, social media material, and ads can all be customized to appeal to women buyers.

The findings emphasize the importance of selecting attractive TikTok influencers for marketing campaigns. TikTok's short, quick video require immediate visual appeal. Influencers can attract audiences with talent or social media skills, but cosmetic brands prioritize beauty. Influencers should demonstrate visible improvements from using the products, thereby validating their effectiveness. Trustworthiness forms the foundation for how audiences evaluate influencers' information. Since cosmetics contain various medical ingredients that directly affect consumer health, consumers often research products carefully. A credible influencer simplifies this research process and speed up purchase decisions. Notably, audiences value believable opinions and logical reviews more than specific expertise. While interactivity may have a minor direct impact on purchase intentions, it remains important for maintaining competitive advantage. Interactive video content strengthens the relationship between influencers, brands, and their audiences. This engagement helps creators better understand audience needs, leading to more valuable product reviews.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Huy Hung Ta, Thi Mai Le.
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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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