

THE IMPACT OF TIKTOK INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY AND AUTHENTICITY ON THE PURCHASE INTENTION OF UNJ STUDENTS FOR PROMOTED PRODUCTS

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Abstract

This research seeks to scrutinize how TikTok influencers' perceived credibility and authenticity shape consumers' inclination to make a purchase of Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) students toward endorsed products. The expanding use of influencer marketing on social media, particularly on TikTok, highlights the need to provide a clearer account of how influencer characteristics affect consumer behavior. Employing a quantitative research design, this study uses a survey method with respondents consisting of UNJ students who actively use TikTok and follow at least one influencer. To test the proposed research model, the data were processed using the analytical framework was operationalized using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) within the SmartPLS platform. These findings suggest that purchase intention toward influencer-promoted products is influenced by a more complex decision-making process, where influencer credibility and authenticity may operate indirectly or in conjunction with other factors rather than as direct predictors. This study deepens the theoretical grounding of influencer marketing research by emphasizing the complex and contextual role of influencer characteristics in influencing consumer behavior on TikTok. Future research is recommended to incorporate mediating or moderating variables to better explain the mechanisms underlying purchase intention in social media contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

TikTok is recognized as a prominent platform within social media networks and short music video applications originating from China, launched by Zhang Yiming in September 2016, with the purpose of facilitating users in creating short music videos (Mahardika et al., 2021). Initially, TikTok was primarily used for short videos in which users expressed themselves creatively through dance content. Over time, TikTok has evolved into an application that adapts to digital developments by adding features that align with consumer needs. In line with technological advancements, social media is no longer merely a means of entertainment, information dissemination, and communication, but has also become a space for interaction and economic activities, including shopping and product marketing (Zahra et al., 2023). This development has opened new opportunities for businesses to broaden their operations and market presence. Among various digital platforms used for online business activities, TikTok has rapidly grown and gained significant popularity in Indonesia by attracting users from diverse demographic groups through its creative, engaging, and interactive video-based content.

The emergence of TikTok influencers or digital creators began with individuals uploading entertaining videos that later went viral. As a result of this virality, some individuals started building personal branding and consistently uploading content that reflected their branding identity. Personal branding can be simply defined as the process of building a personal brand or enhancing an individual's market value (Imawati et al., 2016). In today's competitive

environment, an increasing number of individuals possess similar skills. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a strong personal brand image to highlight one's expertise and differentiate it from others with comparable abilities (Mulyana & Listiani, 2024). Through this branding process, influencers focus on sharing knowledge on specific topics or producing content within their areas of expertise. Content that demonstrates creativity, uniqueness, and high quality can easily capture audience attention, as it is perceived as trustworthy and reputable. These creators possess the ability to build relationships with their followers through personal, authentic, and entertaining communication styles. Consequently, influencers who initially created content solely for entertainment are now trusted by brands to promote their products.

This promotional strategy is known as influencer marketing and has crystallized as one of the most potent promotional mechanisms in the digital business landscape. The use of social media in business is considered an attractive marketing tool because it significantly impacts how users engage in two-way communication, interact with various types of content such as images, videos, and text shared by friends or other users, thereby fostering engagement, strengthening relationships, and creating value for customers (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Utilizing influencers as marketing communicators has become an essential component of modern marketing strategies.

Influencer marketing is perceived as more appealing to consumers than traditional advertising because it creates a strong relational influence between consumers and their favorite influencers (Belanche et al., 2021). This suggests that influencer marketing has become one of the most impactful promotional approaches used by companies today. Influencers are expected to demonstrate strong credibility and authenticity, as these qualities help build consumer trust in the endorsed products. Greater influencer credibility is associated with higher levels of consumer trust, which may ultimately encourage stronger purchase intentions toward the promoted products. Recommendations or promotional offers delivered by trusted influencers can positively influence followers' willingness to purchase, driven by the trust that has been previously built between influencers and their audiences (Kemeç & Fulya, 2021). High-quality videos also contribute positively to the credibility of both the influencer and the promoted product, increasing audience trust in product recommendations and potentially shaping favorable perceptions toward the product (Fadilla & Rimadias, 2024). Consequently, companies or brands only need to select influencers whose credibility aligns with the image of the products being promoted. Essentially, social media influencers function as brand ambassadors whose opinions can influence audiences (Belanche et al., 2021). Previous studies have revealed that influencer credibility engenders a propitious effect on online engagement and purchase intention; the higher the influencer's credibility, the stronger the audience's intention to purchase the promoted products. Moreover, prior research indicates that influencer credibility positively affects perceived online engagement, as credible influencers are regarded as reliable sources of information. Honesty in reviewing products and responding to product-related questions, whether positive or negative fosters interaction with audiences, builds strong connections, and ultimately influences purchase intentions (Fadilla & Rimadias, 2024).

Influencer authenticity can also be a significant factor influencing consumer purchase intention. Ki et al. (2022) state that the authenticity of influencer information has a significant impact when consumers feel inspired by the influencer promoting a product. However, this finding contrasts with the study by Andonopoulos et al. (2023), which suggests that although social media authenticity can enhance an influencer's inspirational capacity, it does not always directly influence consumers' purchase intentions.

Considering the observed phenomena and prior studies that report inconsistent findings regarding the effects of influencer credibility and authenticity, this research seeks to investigate the impact of TikTok influencer credibility and authenticity on the purchase intention of UNJ students toward promoted products. Furthermore, the study explores the extent to which credibility and authenticity interact in shaping purchase intention. The results are expected to offer deeper insights into the role of influencer attributes in the TikTok context and to provide practical implications for marketing practitioners in developing more effective and contextually appropriate influencer marketing strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Influencer Marketing

In the book *Influencer* (Grenny et al., 2013), an influencer is defined as the ability to create changes in human behavior and the individual who carries out such influence. According to Handika and Darma (2021), an influencer is an individual or a group that has an influence on others, such as celebrities who currently serve as references for society. Meanwhile, influencer marketing is considered one of the most salient new approaches in the field of marketing over the past decade, particularly for professionals who influence purchasing decision-making (Mulyono, 2022). Influencer marketing can be an effective strategy for strengthening brand image and improving consumer awareness of a brand or its products (Hariyanti & Wirapraja, 2018). In their study, Ajis and Ekowati (2020) explain that influencer marketing has a positive effect on purchase decisions. Influencer marketing is viewed as one of the most effective strategies for attracting potential consumers in social media marketing by leveraging the audience owned by an influencer. Through influencer marketing, an influencer can create a better brand image for a product

at a lower cost compared to using celebrity brand endorsers or high-profile public figures (Mulyono, 2022). Furthermore, Mulyono (2022) also states that influencer marketing is generally selected based on an influencer's abilities, expertise, level of popularity, and reputation.

2.2 Influencer Credibility

Credibility can be defined as the ability to be trusted, meaning that the higher the credibility of information or its source, the higher the level of trust placed in that information (Tseng & Fogg, 1999). According to Hamouda, influencer credibility refers to the attitude of influencers in presenting information honestly, reliably, and in a manner consistent with what is received by consumers (Tiara Putri et al., 2023). In their study, Fadilla and Rimadias (2024) define influencer credibility as the extent to which an individual is perceived as trustworthy by the public regarding the content they create on social media platforms, particularly on topics relevant to their audience.

According to Ohanian (2013), influencer credibility consists of three indicators: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Attractiveness refers to physical appeal that can be directly perceived, such as appearance related to fashion, cosmetics, and other visual attributes (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). Expertise is defined as the level of experience and knowledge an individual possesses regarding a particular product or subject matter (Zha et al., 2018). Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which an individual is perceived as honest and reliable, addressing the question of whether a person can be trusted based on what they communicate. This dimension evaluates whether influencers provide objective reviews or whether their opinions may be influenced by compensation received from the brands featured in their content (Cahyadiningrum & Rahardjo, 2023).

Despite the widely accepted the formative role of influencer credibility in configuring consumer attitudes, several studies suggest that credibility does not always translate into purchase intention. Breves et al. (2019) found that while influencer credibility enhances perceived trustworthiness, it does not necessarily lead to higher purchase intention, particularly when audiences are highly aware of commercial motives. Similarly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) reported that credibility alone is insufficient to directly influence purchase intention without the presence of strong emotional attachment or perceived product relevance. Furthermore, Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget (2020) argue that followers may perceive credible influencers as informative rather than persuasive, resulting in limited behavioral impact. These findings indicate that influencer credibility may function as a supporting or contextual factor, rather than a direct determinant of purchase intention.

2.3 Influencer Authenticity

Authenticity has become a central concept in influencer marketing, particularly in the context of social media platforms such as TikTok, where audiences increasingly value genuine and relatable content. Authenticity describes the degree to which an influencer is viewed as genuine, sincere, and consistent with their true self, rather than being perceived as artificially created or primarily motivated by commercial interests (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Moulard, 2018). According to Audrezet et al. (2018), influencer authenticity is reflected in the alignment between an influencer's personal identity, values, and the content they share with their audience. When influencers consistently present themselves in a transparent and natural manner, audiences are more likely to perceive them as authentic. This perceived authenticity strengthens emotional connections and fosters trust between influencers and followers.

Lou and Yuan (2019) argue that authenticity in influencer marketing arises when sponsored content is perceived as sincere and congruent with the influencer's usual style and personality. Influencers who disclose brand partnerships transparently and maintain consistent communication styles are more likely to be viewed as authentic. Conversely, overly scripted or excessively promotional content can undermine authenticity and reduce audience engagement. Amid the evolving terrain of social media marketing, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) find that authenticity plays a crucial role in shaping audience attitudes toward influencer-endorsed products. Followers tend to respond more positively to influencers who share honest experiences, personal stories, and balanced opinions, including both positive and negative aspects of a product. Such behaviors signal sincerity and reinforce perceptions of authenticity.

In summary, influencer authenticity represents a multidimensional construct encompassing honesty, consistency, transparency, and personal congruence. While authenticity positively shapes audience perceptions and relational bonds, its influence on purchase intention may depend on contextual and psychological factors. Therefore, authenticity should be examined not only as a direct predictor of consumer behavior but also as a variable that interacts with other elements within the influencer marketing ecosystem.

Although influencer authenticity is often associated with positive audience perceptions, Studies examining its unbuffered effect on purchase intention show a lack of consensus. Audrezet et al. (2018) emphasize that authenticity primarily strengthens emotional bonds and trust rather than immediate purchasing behavior. In line with

this, Jin and Ryu (2020) found that perceived authenticity increases engagement and attitude toward the influencer but does not consistently predict purchase intention. Moreover, de Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) suggest that highly authentic influencers may even reduce persuasion effectiveness when followers interpret sponsored content as conflicting with the influencer's genuine image. This implies that authenticity may influence purchase intention indirectly or under specific contextual conditions rather than acting as a direct predictor.

2.4 Purchase Intention

According to Martinez and Soyong Kim (2012), purchase intention refers to the stage at which respondents show a tendency to act before actually making a purchase. Online shopping intention is part of consumers' desire to engage in online purchasing activities (Thamizhvanan et al., 2012). Purchase intention can be understood as a combination of consumer interest and the likelihood of purchasing products through social media platforms (Aji et al., 2020). Punuindoong et al. (2020) state that purchase intention reflects consumers' beliefs, which can shape favorable evaluations of products that may be repurchased by customers. Purchase intention represents consumers' desire to purchase a product based on various considerations (Yuliana & Kristiana, 2021). Purchase intention can be realized when the product criteria align with customers' preferences and expectations (Liew & Falahat, 2019). According to Ichtiar, Suhud, and Kusumaningtyas (2025), purchase intention is defined as consumers' intention or willingness to buy a product after undergoing an evaluation and decision-making process influenced by their assessment of the product.

Based on the mixed findings in previous studies, the interconnection between influencer credibility, influencer authenticity, and purchase intention remains inconclusive. While some studies report positive effects, others indicate weak or non-significant relationships. This inconsistency highlights the need for further empirical investigation, particularly within the context of TikTok influencers and student consumers. Therefore, this study aims to re-examine the influence of influencer credibility and authenticity on purchase intention to address the existing research gap.

2.5 Empirical Review and Hypothesis

Influencer credibility has been widely recognized as a key factor influencing consumers' purchase intention in social media marketing. Influencers who are perceived as credible tend to generate higher levels of trust, which in turn increases consumers' willingness to consider and purchase promoted products. Prior studies indicate that credible influencers can positively shape consumers' attitudes and purchasing decisions by delivering reliable and persuasive information.

Empirical investigations to date have probed the influence of influencer credibility on consumer purchase intention in Indonesian contexts. Anggara, Wibowo, and Fidhyallah (2025) found that influencer credibility positively and significantly influences purchase intention in TikTok Shop, both directly and through consumer trust as a mediator. However, Kusbianto, Pratiwi, and Maduwinati (2025) observed that credibility did not significantly affect purchase intention in live shopping environments, suggesting that its impact may vary by platform and context. Furthermore, Wijayanti, Hidayat, and Puspitasari (2025) reported that influencer credibility alone did not significantly influence consumer purchase intention on TikTok. These mixed findings indicate that the effect of influencer credibility on purchase intention remains inconclusive, particularly in social media contexts such as TikTok. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: TikTok influencer credibility has a significant effect on UNJ students' purchase intention toward promoted products.

In addition to credibility, influencer authenticity has also been acknowledged as an important determinant of consumers' purchase intention. Authentic influencers are perceived as embodying authenticity, openness, and narrative consistency within their content, which can enhance emotional connection and trust among audiences. Empirical evidence suggests that higher levels of influencer authenticity are associated with stronger consumer engagement and increased purchase intention toward promoted products.

Research on influencer authenticity and purchase intention in Indonesia has shown diverse results. Aurellia and Dewi (2025) highlighted that influencer authenticity contributes to purchase intention via parasocial relationships among TikTok users. Conversely, in live shopping contexts, Kusbianto et al. (2025) found that influencer authenticity, while significant, interacts differently with other factors like engagement. Nevertheless, empirical evidence regarding the direct impact of influencer authenticity on purchase intention remains inconsistent. Some studies indicate that authenticity primarily affects engagement and attitude rather than purchase intention (Jin & Ryu, 2020), while others argue that excessive authenticity in sponsored content may reduce persuasion effectiveness (de Veirman et al., 2017). These findings suggest that authenticity's influence may operate indirectly or depend on

intermediary psychological constructs. Given these inconsistencies, further empirical examination is necessary. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: TikTok influencer authenticity has a significant effect on UNJ students' purchase intention toward promoted products.

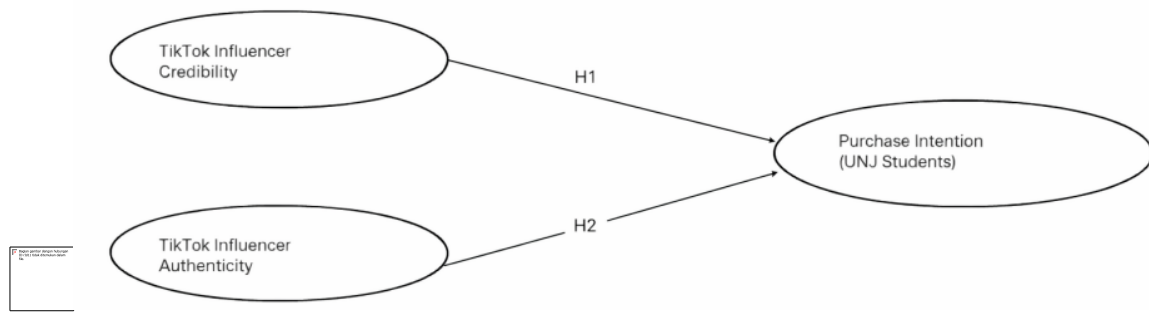


Figure 1. Framework of Constructs for the Study
Source: Author (2025)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design with a less formal approach applied to investigate relationships related to influencer credibility, authenticity influencer, and purchase intention. The research employs Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) as the primary analytical technique. SEM-PLS is considered appropriate because this study aims to predict relationships among latent variables and handle complex models with multiple constructs and indicators. SmartPLS software was employed to perform the data analysis, as it is frequently utilized in behavioral and social research.

3.2 Population and Sample

The empirical population delineated in this study comprises students of all faculties of the Universitas Negeri Jakarta. Data were obtained from 127 participants in this research, exceeding the minimum sample size requirement for SEM-PLS analysis. The sample size is considered adequate to ensure statistical power and model stability. Respondents were procured through a non-probabilistic sampling scheme, specifically convenience sampling, due to accessibility and respondent availability.

3.3 Methodological Approach to Data Acquisition

Data were gathered through a survey approach using an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The instrument was developed to assess influencer credibility, influencer authenticity, and purchase intention using a series of structured statements. Levels of agreement were captured through a Likert-based response scale, with anchors ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement. This study adopts a quantitative research design, as the data collected are numerical in nature and subjected to inferential statistical scrutiny to appraise the postulated hypotheses.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The research model was examined through SEM-PLS using SmartPLS, involving the evaluation of indicator performance in the measurement model and the testing of relationships within the structural model.

3.4.1 Outer Model Evaluation

The evaluation of the outer model was conducted to examine the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments. Several assessment criteria were applied, including indicator reliability measured by outer loading values, measurement quality was assessed through multiple validation procedures: internal consistency was determined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, convergent validity was evidenced by the AVE values, and discriminant validity was inspected using the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT approaches. Indicators with outer loading values above 0.70 were considered ideal, while values above 0.60 were deemed acceptable for exploratory research.

3.4.2 Inner Model Evaluation

The inner model evaluation focuses on examining the relationships among latent variables. The following criteria were used:

- Path coefficients to assess the strength and direction of relationships
- Coefficient of determination (R^2) to evaluate the explanatory power of endogenous variables
- Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to detect multicollinearity issues

- Indirect effects to examine mediation relationships

3.5 Hypothesis Testing

The postulated hypotheses were scrutinized through the bootstrapping procedure embedded in SmartPLS. The significance of each hypothesis was determined based on:

- T-statistics, with a threshold value greater than 1.96
- P-values, with a significance level of 0.05

Hypotheses were accepted if the relationships showed statistically significant results according to these criteria.

3.6 Moderation Testing

This study also examines potential moderation effects to determine whether certain variables strengthen or weaken the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Moderation analysis was performed by creating interaction terms within the SEM-PLS framework and evaluating their significance using bootstrapping. The presence of moderation effects was determined based on the significance of the interaction paths.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Respondent Profile

The respondents of this study consist of 361 students from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Jakarta (FEB UNJ). Based on the study program distribution, the majority of respondents are from the Digital Business program (32%), followed by Accounting (12.7%) and Management (12%), indicating that the sample largely represents students with academic exposure to business and financial topics.

From a gender-based standpoint, the respondents are relatively balanced, with 42% male and 58% female participants. The age distribution ranges from 18 to 20 years (42,5%), with the largest proportion aged >20 years (57,5%). This age profile reflects a young and productive demographic group that is highly relevant to the reported using TikTok, following one or more TikTok influencers, frequently watching influencer content that shares opinions or recommendations, and being interested in a product after seeing it in TikTok content.

Based on the distribution of study programs, the respondents were from the Faculty of Education (FIP) at 11.5%, the Faculty of Languages and Arts (FBS) at 8.8%, the Faculty of Psychology (FPPsi) at 11.1%, the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) at 22.1%, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law (FISH) at 7.1%, the Faculty of Engineering (FT) at 13.7%, the Faculty of Sports Science (FIK) at 10.6%, and the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMIPA) at 15%. All respondents (100%) reported using TikTok, following one or more TikTok influencers, frequently watching influencer content that shares opinions or recommendations, and being interested in a product after seeing it in TikTok content.

4.1.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

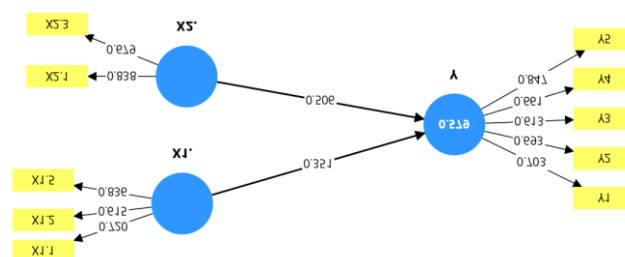


Figure 2. Outer Loading Evaluation

Source: Author (2025)

Indicator reliability was assessed using outer loading values. The results show that all indicators have loading values above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60. Specifically, the outer loading values for Influencer Credibility (X1) range from 0.615 to 0.836, Influencer Authenticity (X2) from 0.679 to 0.838 and Purchase Intention (Y) from 0.613 to 0.847. Indicator reliability was assessed using outer loading values. During the initial measurement model evaluation, several indicators showed loading values below the recommended threshold. Therefore, indicators with low outer loadings were removed to improve indicator reliability. After model refinement, each indicator that remained in the measurement model met the required outer loading criterion of greater than 0.60, indicating that they adequately represent their respective latent constructs. Thus, the final measurement model meets the criteria for indicator reliability.

The reliability of internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability measures, including rho_A and rho_C. The reliability test results indicate that the Influencer Credibility and Influencer Authenticity constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and rho_A values below the recommended threshold. However, the Composite Reliability values for both constructs exceed the threshold of 0.70. Considering that Composite Reliability is the primary reliability indicator in PLS-SEM, all constructs in this study are considered reliable. Nevertheless, the low Cronbach's Alpha value for the Influencer Authenticity construct indicates limited internal consistency among its indicators; therefore, the results related to this construct should be interpreted with caution

- Influencer Credibility (X1): Cronbach's alpha = 0.556, rho_A = 0.591, rho_C = 0.771
- Influencer Authenticity (X2): Cronbach's alpha = 0.289, rho_A = 0.303, rho_C = 0.734
- Purchase Intention (Y): Cronbach's alpha = 0.749, rho_A = 0.767, rho_C = 0.832

These values confirm that the measurement instruments are reliable and consistently measure each construct.

The AVE analysis indicates that the proportion of variance captured by each construct is adequate, as all values are higher than 0.50, confirming satisfactory convergent validity.

- Influencer Credibility (X1): AVE = 0.532
- Influencer Authenticity (X2): AVE = 0.582
- Purchase Intention (Y): AVE = 0.501

These findings suggest that each construct accounts for more than fifty percent of the variance in its respective indicators. Discriminant validity was subsequently assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT).

- HTMT X1–X2 = 1.404
- HTMT X1–Y = 0.948
- HTMT X2–Y = 1.465

The separability of latent constructs was evaluated through the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The results indicate that several HTMT values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, with some values surpassing 1.00, suggesting a lack of discriminant validity among the constructs. Specifically, the HTMT values for X1–X2 (1.404), X1–Y (0.948), and X2–Y (1.465) indicate very strong inter-construct correlations. This finding suggests substantial overlap among the constructs, which may reflect similarities in respondents' perceptions within the same digital context. Therefore, the results related to discriminant validity should be interpreted with caution, and this limitation is acknowledged in the interpretation of the structural model results.

Table 1. R-Squared

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Y	0.579	0.571

Source: Author (2025)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that the structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power. The R^2 value for usage decision (Y) is 0.579, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.571, showing that 57.9% of the variance in usage decision can be explained by the independent variables included in the model, while the remaining 42.1% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. This indicates that the model has strong explanatory power, as the R^2 value exceeds the commonly accepted threshold for substantial explanatory strength in PLS-SEM

Table 2. F-Squared

	x1	x2	y
x1			0.201
x2			0.417
y			

Source: Author (2025)

The effect size (f^2) analysis reveals varying levels of influence among the exogenous variables. Influencer authenticity shows a moderate effect on purchase intention ($f^2 = 0.201$), while Influencer credibility exhibits a large effect ($f^2 = 0.417$). These results indicate that both variables meaningfully contribute to explaining purchase intention; however, influencer credibility plays a more dominant role in influencing students' purchase intention toward promoted products compared to influencer authenticity.

Table 3. Indirect Effects

	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
x1 -> y1	0.93	0.351
x2 -> y1	0.66	0.506

Source: Author (2025)

Overall, the findings indicate that X1 and X2 do not have a statistically significant direct effect on Y1. This suggests that the proposed independent variables are not sufficient to directly explain changes in the dependent variable within the research model. Therefore, other variables, indirect relationships, or mediating factors may play a more important role in influencing Y1 and should be considered in future studies.

4.2 Discussion

H1: Influencer Credibility → Purchase Intention

The results indicate that the credibility ascribed to influencers does not evince a significant direct bearing on consumers' purchase intention. The path coefficient shows a positive relationship; however, the effect is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.351$; $t = 0.93$; $p = 0.351$). Since the t-statistic is below the critical value of 1.96 and the p-value exceeds the 0.05 significance level, the influence of influencer credibility on students' purchase intention toward promoted products cannot be empirically confirmed.

This finding suggests that although students may perceive TikTok influencers as credible, such credibility alone is insufficient to directly encourage purchase intention. Other factors, such as personal product relevance, price considerations, or peer influence, may play a more decisive role in shaping purchase intention. Therefore, H1 is not supported.

H2: Influencer Authenticity → Purchase Intention

The structural path linking influencer authenticity to purchase intention was found to be statistically unsupported. The path coefficient between influencer authenticity and purchase intention is positive but statistically insignificant ($\beta = 0.506$; $t = 0.66$; $p = 0.506$). The obtained t-value does not meet the critical value of 1.96, while the corresponding p-value exceeds the 0.05 significance level.

This result indicates that while authentic presentation by influencers may be appreciated by students, it does not necessarily translate into a direct intention to purchase promoted products. The finding implies that authenticity may influence purchase intention indirectly or in combination with other variables rather than as a standalone predictor. Consequently, H2 is not supported.

5. CONCLUSION

This research enriches the influencer marketing discourse by demonstrating that, within the TikTok environment and among student audiences, influencer credibility and authenticity do not directly translate into purchase intention in a statistically significant manner. Contrary to the dominant view in previous studies that treat these attributes as immediate drivers of purchasing decisions, the results indicate that their influence may operate through more nuanced or indirect pathways.

The results indicate that influencer credibility and authenticity may function as supporting or contextual factors rather than standalone predictors of purchase intention. This finding extends existing theories of influencer marketing and consumer behavior by highlighting the possibility that credibility and authenticity primarily influence intermediate psychological mechanisms, such as trust, perceived product value, brand attitude, or social identification, before affecting purchase intention. Additionally, the high HTMT values suggest conceptual proximity among the constructs, emphasizing the need for clearer theoretical distinctions in future model development.

From a managerial vantage point, the findings intimate that brands ought not to rely exclusively on influencer credibility and authenticity to drive purchase intention. Although these attributes remain important for building awareness and engagement, they may be insufficient to directly convert audiences into buyers.

Brands are encouraged to complement influencer collaborations with strong product-related cues, such as clear value propositions, competitive pricing, promotional incentives, and compelling calls to action. Furthermore, selecting influencers should go beyond perceived credibility and authenticity, incorporating factors such as audience-product fit, content relevance, engagement quality, and message consistency. Brands may also consider integrating influencer marketing with other digital strategies, such as user-generated content, peer reviews, or limited-time promotions, to strengthen purchase intention outcomes.

The inherent constraints of this study beget prospective trajectories for future scholarly examination. First, the absence of significant direct effects suggests that other mediating or moderating variables may play a crucial role in explaining purchase intention. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate variables such as brand trust, perceived product value, parasocial interaction, social influence, or attitude toward the brand to better capture the underlying mechanisms.

Second, future research may explore different consumer segments, platforms, or product categories to enhance generalizability. Additionally, employing mixed method approaches or longitudinal designs could provide deeper insights into how influencer credibility and authenticity influence consumer behavior over time.

Overall, the findings imply that students' purchase intention on TikTok is influenced by a more complex decision-making process, where influencer-related attributes alone are insufficient to directly drive purchase intention. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate mediating or moderating variables such as brand trust,

perceived product value, or social influence to better explain the mechanisms underlying purchase intention in influencer marketing contexts.

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