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The Influence of Tik Tok Content on the Purchase Decisions of Customers in Indonesian Skincare Industry

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Abstract. *TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential social media platforms, forming a global online community that penetrates diverse industries, including skincare. In Indonesia, skincare ranks among the most discussed topics on TikTok, which makes the platform a significant channel for influencing consumer behavior. This study aimed to analyze how TikTok content shapes consumer purchasing decisions for skincare products in Indonesia. A qualitative method was applied using in-depth interviews with 12 respondents representing young adult consumers familiar with skincare products. The findings highlight several insights. First, TikTok content positively influences the problem recognition stage, helping consumers become more aware of their skincare needs. Second, TikTok was identified as the second most used social media source for skincare-related information, though its credibility is perceived only at a moderate level. Third, the platform plays a moderate role in the evaluation of alternatives, where consumers compare and consider skincare products. However, nearly half of the respondents reported a gap between information obtained from TikTok and actual product performance, resulting in disappointment and reluctance to share their experiences on the platform. Moreover, respondents revealed clear preferences regarding content: (1) comparative content showcasing product performance, (2) detailed content discussing product features, and (3) content providing tangible proof of effectiveness. These findings emphasize the dual role of TikTok as both an influential information source and a platform with credibility challenges. The study contributes to a better understanding of digital consumer behavior in Indonesia's skincare industry. It also provides practical recommendations for marketers to design more transparent, credible, and consumer-oriented TikTok marketing strategies.*

Keywords: *Buyer; Media; Skincare; Tik Tok; Trend*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of daily life, significantly transforming how businesses operate. Today, buyers no longer need to visit physical stores to make purchases, and sellers can promote their products without traditional displays, all thanks to the power of social media. According to Wearesocial.com, approximately 170 million out of 273.8 million Indonesians use at least one social media platform, underscoring its status as a primary necessity in modern society. This shift has profoundly impacted the marketing industry, as social media offers a faster, cheaper, and more accessible alternative to traditional methods like print and electronic advertisements (Marketing et al., 2023). Moreover, social media platforms provide innovative features that enhance product promotion, making them indispensable for modern marketers.

Among the various social media platforms, TikTok has emerged as a viral tool for marketing, particularly in Indonesia. As an audio-visual application, TikTok allows users to express themselves through short, engaging videos, making it a powerful medium for spreading news and promoting products. Indonesia ranks fourth globally in terms of TikTok users, with

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a significant portion being young adults or Generation Z (Fadhilah & Saputra, 2021). This demographic's active participation has led marketers to leverage TikTok for digital marketing strategies (Nandinee, 2019). One of the most popular content categories on TikTok is beauty and skincare, which aligns with the high user interest in this field. In Indonesia, the fashion/beauty category is among the top five video categories, prompting many cosmetic industry players to adopt TikTok as a key marketing platform (Sasmita & Achmadi, 2022). Given this correlation, this study aims to explore how TikTok content influences the buyer decision process in Indonesia's skincare industry.

The research seeks to answer the central question: 'How does TikTok content influence the buyer decision process of customers in Indonesia's skincare industry?' To provide a comprehensive analysis, the study adopts John Dewey's (1910) framework, dividing the buyer decision process into five stages. These stages are further broken down into four sub-questions: (1) the effect of TikTok content on problem recognition, (2) its impact on information search, (3) its role in the evaluation of alternatives, and (4) its influence on purchasing and post-purchase decisions. Additionally, the study will offer recommendations for marketers in the skincare industry to optimize their TikTok strategies.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TikTok has a predominantly young user base, with 41% of its users under 35 years old (Koetsier, 2019), making it an attractive platform for marketers to build engagement. On average, users spend about 45 minutes daily on the app, prompting brands to integrate content marketing strategies into this space. Content marketing differs from traditional promotion because it emphasizes relevance, value, and consistency to attract and retain audiences, thereby fostering stronger consumer relationships (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Milhinhos, 2015). Within TikTok, content may come from brands or users. Brand-generated content typically seeks to inform and persuade potential buyers, while user-generated content, such as reviews or testimonials, functions as electronic word-of-mouth (E-WoM) that significantly influences trust and purchasing behavior (Chu & Kim, 2018; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Among the most impactful elements on TikTok are product reviews. Viral hashtags such as #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt have attracted millions of views, demonstrating the platform's ability to create sudden surges in product demand (Scanlan, 2020). Such reviews, whether positive or negative, serve as reference points for consumers and shape perceptions of credibility and product value. This dynamic underscores TikTok's role not only as a channel

for entertainment but also as a persuasive marketing tool with the capacity to alter purchase intentions.

Consumer behavior in this study is analyzed using Dewey's five-stage decision process. The first stage, problem recognition, occurs when individuals realize a gap between their current and desired condition. This is followed by the information search, where consumers gather knowledge from internal sources such as experience or from external sources like advertisements and reviews. The third stage, evaluation of alternatives, involves comparing products based on attributes such as price, quality, and recommendations. The purchase decision follows, determined by both attitudes and situational factors, while the final stage, post-purchase behavior, involves satisfaction or dissatisfaction that subsequently influences loyalty and future buying patterns (Kotler et al., 2009). Although generally presented as a linear model, these stages often overlap in practice (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005). Within this framework, TikTok content can intervene at every stage, particularly through its algorithm-driven recommendations and its reliance on peer reviews that increase exposure, stimulate awareness, and affect consumer decisions.

3. METHOD

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research approach that combined both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 12 respondents, a method selected for its ability to capture detailed and comprehensive insights into the research problem (Dwyer & Limb, 2001). To identify suitable participants within the available timeframe, a preliminary questionnaire was distributed. Interviews followed a semi-structured format with pre-prepared open-ended questions, while additional questions were introduced when necessary to explore emerging themes. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, transcribed, and subsequently translated into English.

Research Purpose

The objective of this study was to evaluate the influence of TikTok content on the buyer decision process in Indonesia's skincare industry. Specifically, it focused on four dimensions: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchasing and post-purchase behavior.

Data Collection Method

Data collection began with an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and shared across social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Line, Instagram, and TikTok. Respondents who met the study's criteria were contacted for further in-depth interviews conducted through WhatsApp.

Data Analysis Method

The interview transcripts were translated into English and analyzed using grounded theory, a qualitative methodology that involves coding data from various sources, such as interviews and observations (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Content analysis was employed to systematically condense data into categories, ensuring a transparent and repeatable process (Stemler, 2015). The analysis followed four key steps: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display, and (4) conclusion drawing. Respondents were anonymized using codes (e.g., Respondent 1, Respondent 2).

Interview Questions

A semi-structured interview guide was used to explore respondents' perspectives, designed to align with the stages of the buyer decision process (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). For the problem recognition stage, participants were asked whether browsing skincare content on TikTok was linked to purchase intention, whether the content made them aware of skin problems, and whether it ever prompted impulse buying. For the information search stage, questions addressed whether respondents researched skincare products before purchasing, which platforms they preferred, and whether TikTok was perceived as a reliable information source. For the evaluation of alternatives stage, respondents were asked what factors they considered when comparing brands, whether TikTok information was used in evaluation, and how negative reviews influenced their decisions. Finally, for the purchasing and post-purchase stage, questions covered the impact of positive and negative reviews, whether product performance matched TikTok content, and what type of skincare-related TikTok content they preferred. Follow-up questions were adapted for each respondent to gain deeper insights.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Demographic Analysis

Samples were obtained through purposive sampling, where the researchers set specific criteria and distributed questionnaires to potential participants in order to identify suitable respondents. From a total of 30 individuals who completed the questionnaire, 90% were female and 10% male. The majority resided in Bali (40%), followed by Jakarta (20%), Surabaya (20%), Batam (10%), and Yogyakarta (10%). In terms of income, half of the respondents reported monthly earnings between Rp 1,000,000 and Rp 5,000,000, 40% earned between Rp 5,000,000 and Rp 10,000,000, and the remaining 10% earned less than Rp 1,000,000. From these respondents, 12 individuals who met the established criteria—namely being TikTok users and having previously viewed skincare-related content on the platform—were selected for in-depth interviews.

TikTok Content on Problem Recognition Stage

As shown in Fig. 1, half of the respondents (50%) reported that they always encountered skincare content on TikTok, while 16.7% stated they frequently did, and another 16.7% said they rarely or occasionally came across it. Several participants mentioned that content often appeared in their For You Page (FYP) without actively searching, which illustrates the role of TikTok's algorithm in shaping exposure.

Regarding purchase intention, 66.6% admitted they sometimes browsed skincare content with the aim of buying, 16.7% always did so, and the remainder rarely considered purchasing. Apart from buying motives, respondents also browsed skincare content for entertainment and to follow trends. Importantly, 75% acknowledged that TikTok content made them aware of specific skin concerns, such as dullness or acne, which demonstrates TikTok's capacity to stimulate problem recognition.

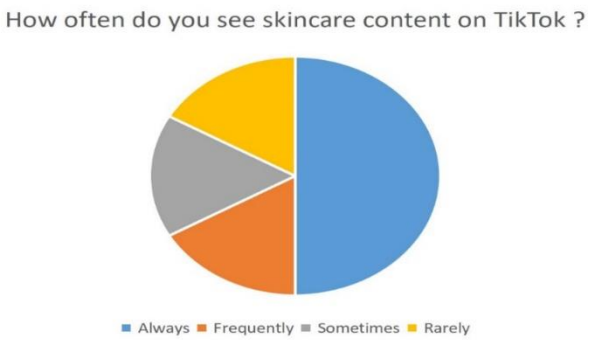

Fig 1. How often respondent see skincare content on TikTok.

This aligns with Dang et al.,(2021) who found TikTok use heightened problem recognition, especially for users with low initial awareness. TikTok's algorithm, which suggests content based on user interests, further amplifies this effect by exposing users to new products and trends. The platform also acts as a reference group, with respondents expressing curiosity about products popular among TikTok users. These findings suggest TikTok significantly influences problem recognition, particularly for users with lower awareness levels. Marketers should tailor content to target consumers based on their problem recognition levels.

TikTok Content on Information Search Stage

All respondents reported that they always conduct research before purchasing new skincare products. As shown in the survey results, YouTube was mentioned by the majority (9 respondents) as the primary platform for gathering information, largely because of its long-duration videos that provide more detailed explanations compared to TikTok. TikTok was cited by five respondents as either a main or secondary source, with participants noting that its short videos offer quick insights and entertaining content but often lack depth. Other platforms mentioned included Instagram (2 respondents) and Google (1 respondent).

When asked about TikTok's credibility, 58.3% of respondents considered it reliable, 25% were unsure, and 16.7% expressed doubts. Those who trusted TikTok highlighted the honesty of some creators and the corrective role of the comment section, while others expressed concern about the prevalence of paid endorsements and the lack of professional qualifications among many influencers. Respondents indicated that credibility depended largely on the source: dermatologist reviews or content with before-and-after evidence were regarded as more trustworthy than regular user endorsements.

While YouTube remains the primary source for skincare information, TikTok ranks second due to its engaging short-form videos and algorithm-driven content discovery. However, TikTok's short video format limits the depth of information, making it less reliable for some users. Despite this, 58.3% of respondents find TikTok reliable for skincare information, with user-generated content (UGC) and e-WoM being more trusted than brand-generated content. Influencers 'credibility also plays a role, as users prefer recommendations from knowledgeable sources. TikTok's interactive features, such as polls and Q&A sessions, further enhance its utility in the information search stage. Marketers should focus on creating engaging, credible content and collaborating with knowledgeable influencers to improve trust and reliability.

TikTok Content on Evaluating Alternatives Stage

When evaluating skincare brands, all respondents emphasized product function and price as the primary considerations. Some participants also mentioned additional factors such as packaging, ingredients, skin compatibility, and brand popularity.

As shown in Fig. 2, 41.7% of respondents reported frequently using TikTok content when evaluating skincare products, 33.3% stated they sometimes relied on it, 16.7% said they seldom used it, and 8.3% reported never doing so. Those who used TikTok frequently valued the abundance of product reviews and the convenience of algorithm-driven recommendations, which made it easier to discover relevant content. They also noted that TikTok's short video format allowed them to obtain product comparisons quickly.

Participants who only sometimes or seldom relied on TikTok expressed concerns about excessive advertising and limited depth of information. Several preferred YouTube for its longer, more detailed content, which they believed offered more credibility. The small group who never used TikTok in this stage cited lack of trust as the main reason.

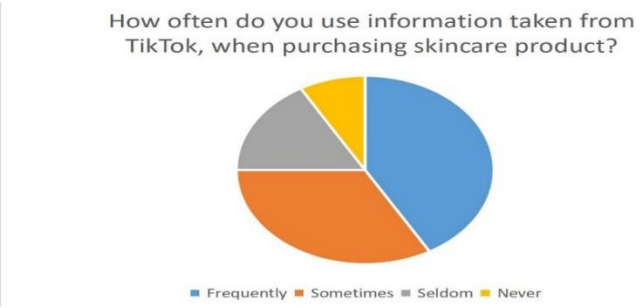

Fig 2. How often respondents use TikTok content when evaluating skincare product.

These findings indicate that TikTok plays a moderate but growing role in the evaluation of alternatives. While its algorithm and short-form videos facilitate quick comparisons, credibility issues remain a barrier. This is consistent with prior research highlighting the importance of information quality and trustworthiness in online consumer evaluations (Chu & Kim, 2018). For marketers, this suggests the need to enhance the reliability of TikTok content through transparent reviews, credible influencers, and informative yet concise video formats.

TikTok Content on Purchase and Post-Purchase Stage

TikTok reviews were found to significantly influence purchase decisions. As shown in the survey, 66.7% of respondents reported that negative reviews strongly affected their willingness to buy, while 33.3% said they were only slightly influenced. Many explained that they would compare reviews from TikTok with information obtained from other platforms before finalizing a purchase. In contrast, 66.7% of respondents stated that positive reviews had

a strong effect on their buying decisions, 25% said the influence was moderate, and 8.3% reported no influence. These results highlight the dual role of TikTok reviews, which can both encourage and discourage purchases depending on content credibility.

Post-purchase evaluations revealed mixed experiences. About one-third (33.3%) of participants felt satisfied because the skincare products performed as advertised on TikTok. However, 41.7% expressed disappointment when product results did not match promotional claims, reducing their trust in TikTok as an information source. The remaining 25% were uncertain about outcomes, noting that skincare effectiveness varies by individual skin type. These findings emphasize the gap between brand-generated promotional content and actual consumer experiences, which may negatively affect trust. This contrasts with Song and Kim (2021), who reported that TikTok positively influenced post-purchase satisfaction in the food industry.

When asked about sharing experiences, most respondents indicated that they would not create content on TikTok due to lack of expertise, confidence, or interest. Instead, they preferred leaving comments on other posts or sharing experiences privately with friends. This pattern suggests that while user-generated content (UGC) is influential, its supply may be limited by consumers' reluctance to produce content themselves.

Overall, TikTok plays a substantial role in shaping both purchase and post-purchase behavior. Negative reviews act as a strong deterrent, while positive reviews can effectively drive purchases if perceived as authentic. However, mismatches between advertised and actual product performance remain a key challenge. To strengthen consumer trust, marketers must ensure product claims are realistic and encourage satisfied users to share genuine experiences, possibly through incentives such as giveaways, challenges, or collaborations with credible influencers.

TikTok Content Regarding Skincare

When asked about the type of TikTok content they found most useful, respondents emphasized credibility, clarity, and entertainment value. Many preferred content that compared and ranked different skincare products, as such comparisons made it easier to evaluate options and sparked curiosity about trying new items. Respondents also appreciated when creators demonstrated products directly on video, since this provided visible proof of use and helped distinguish authentic reviews from paid promotions.

Another preference was for content that explained both the strengths and weaknesses of a product. This style was perceived as more honest, reducing the impression of endorsement-

driven content. Respondents further highlighted the appeal of videos with engaging and well-designed presentations, particularly those that included clear explanations of skin concerns, instructions for use, and before-and-after results.

Overall, respondents expressed a preference for TikTok content that: (1) compares and ranks skincare brands, (2) provides detailed yet simple explanations of product ingredients, price, and performance, and (3) includes evidence of effectiveness through demonstrations or results. These preferences underscore the importance of transparency and proof in content creation. For marketers, this suggests that TikTok strategies should prioritize informative, credible, and visually engaging content in order to build consumer trust and maximize engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

TikTok influences all stages of the consumer decision process, though its impact varies. It significantly drives problem recognition, serves as a secondary source for information search, and moderately aids in evaluating alternatives. However, its influence on purchase and post-purchase stages is mixed, with user reviews impacting decisions but dissatisfaction arising from mismatched product expectations. Many respondents are passive users, limiting UGC generation.

Recommendations for Marketers namely Enhance Credibility: Collaborate with credible influencers and build online brand communities to foster trust and encourage e-WoM. Create Preferred Content: Focus on content that compares products, provides detailed information, and includes evidence of effectiveness. Align Claims with Performance: Ensure product claims match actual performance to avoid post-purchase dissatisfaction. Encourage User Engagement Use incentives like giveaways or contests to motivate users to share their experiences and generate UGC.

By addressing these areas, marketers can leverage TikTok more effectively to influence consumer behavior and drive positive outcomes in the skincare industry.

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