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The effect of user-generated content on purchase intention for skincare products on social media

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the widespread use of User-Generated Content (UGC), such as reviews, tutorials, and user testimonials, in skincare marketing on TikTok. However, prior studies have rarely examined how UGC relates to purchase intention through the Information Adoption Model (IAM), leaving a gap in the literature. This study examines the effect of UGC on purchase intention of skincare products among TikTok users in Indonesia. Using a quantitative explanatory approach, data were collected from 200 TikTok users through purposive sampling and analyzed with SEM-PLS via SmartPLS 4. Results show that UGC has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.515$, $t = 8.533$, $p < 0.001$). However, with an R-Square value of 0.265, it explains only 26.5% of the variance, indicating other factors beyond this model. The study is limited by its cross-sectional design and purposive sampling technique.

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INTRODUCTION

The swift evolution of information and communication technology continues to reshape how Indonesian society searches for product information, with social media now serving as one of the main references before making a purchase decision. Data released by DataReportal (2026) shows that internet users in Indonesia have reached 230 million people, with 180 million of them classified as active social media users, equivalent to 88.9% of the population aged 18 and above, reflecting how central social media has become in shaping consumer behavior toward a product.

These figures refer to overall social media use in Indonesia rather than TikTok specifically, and are presented here only to illustrate the broader digital context in which this study is situated. This growth has also intensified competition in the skincare industry, where TikTok has become one of the most widely used platforms for marketing, owing to its interactive content and adaptive algorithm that helps information reach the right audience (Santosa et al., 2025). Unlike earlier, more static forms of online media, TikTok combines communication, entertainment, and commercial functions within a single platform (Qadir & Ramli, 2024). In consumer behavior, purchase intention describes a consumer's likelihood of proceeding with a purchase after

considering information about an item, an inclination that strengthens when the information is perceived as relevant and trustworthy (Imran & Gunawan, 2025).

One common form of information on TikTok is User-Generated Content (UGC), created by ordinary consumers drawing on their firsthand experience using a product or service, in the form of reviews, tutorials, or testimonials. The Information Adoption Model (IAM) explains how individuals accept information through computer-mediated communication, based on the premise that the quality of information received and the credibility of its source influence subsequent behavior and decision-making (Iskamto & Zumarnis, 2024). Information adoption under IAM occurs through two routes, a central route that emphasizes the quality of the message content, and a peripheral route that emphasizes the credibility of the information source (Sari & Soepatini, 2026). In the context of social media, information quality, source credibility, and perceived usefulness jointly determine whether information is accepted and used as a basis for decision-making, so that information conveyed clearly by a trusted source is more easily considered by consumers before making a purchase decision (Augustine et al., 2026). Within this framework, content that is judged authentic, useful, interesting, and of high valence is more likely to be processed and accepted, thereby shaping purchase intention. This rationale underlies the use of Content Authenticity, Content Usefulness, Content Interestingness, and Content Valence as the four dimensions of UGC examined in this study, as each represents a distinct quality attribute through which information adoption is expected to occur. This phenomenon reflects a broader shift in digital marketing, in which content produced by ordinary users, rather than brands themselves, increasingly drives information dissemination and consumer decision-making (Zhang et al., 2024), a pattern that is especially visible among Indonesian TikTok users, particularly the younger demographic who treat UGC as both an entertainment source and a reference before purchasing (Gautama, 2022). Compared to conventional advertising, UGC tends to be perceived as more authentic since it originates from other users' experiences, thereby increasing consumer trust toward the promoted product (Ahmad & Abubakar, 2026). Its role is especially crucial in the skincare category, as reflected in an analysis by Compas (2025) of 12,900 beauty brands that places Skintific, Wardah, and Glad2Glow among the market leaders, indicating how tightly product choice is tied to what consumers see online (Dewi et al., 2025).

Nonetheless, the extent to which UGC shapes purchase intention is not always consistent across studies. Andriansyah et al. (2025) reported that UGC has a favorable and meaningful influence on purchase intention owing to its perceived authenticity, a pattern similarly observed by Kusuma et al. (2023) and Al Faris et al. (2025) with respect to other skincare brands marketed on TikTok, whereas other studies indicate that this influence is not always significant when more dominant factors, such as brand image and product quality, tend to be present (Aini & Dakwah, 2025). Comparable variation has also been found beyond the skincare category, where Aulia et al. (2025) reported that UGC combined with electronic word-of-mouth affects purchase intention differently depending on the brand and product examined. In addition, most prior studies have focused on how UGC affects purchase intention among specific skincare brands, whereas research investigating UGC's broader influence on consumer intention to purchase skincare products in general within TikTok remains limited. This inconsistency points to an unresolved theoretical question, namely whether the four quality-based dimensions of UGC proposed under the IAM framework consistently predict purchase intention when examined at the product-category level rather than the single-brand level, which constitutes the research gap addressed by this study.

A pre-research survey of 40 TikTok users in Indonesia was conducted informally in early 2026 through a short online questionnaire distributed to active TikTok users who had previously encountered skincare-related content, for exploratory purposes only and not intended as a representative sample. The survey found that most respondents had been exposed to UGC content and felt interested in skincare products after viewing it, while the majority also considered other users' recommendations before purchasing. These descriptive findings are presented solely to

illustrate the relevance of the topic and should not be interpreted as evidence of an effect. This reinforces the relevance of examining UGC's influence on purchase intention among TikTok users in Indonesia more broadly.

Thus, this study offers a contribution by examining, (1) whether UGC influences buying intention toward skincare items on TikTok, (2) the extent to which UGC shapes intention to purchase skincare items via TikTok, and (3) how various dimensions of UGC and purchase interest manifest among skincare consumers on the platform. Based on the theoretical foundation above, this study proposes the following hypothesis. H1, User-Generated Content has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention of skincare products among TikTok users in Indonesia. The novelty of this study lies in extending the IAM framework to the skincare product category as a whole on TikTok, rather than to a single brand as in most prior research. This research is anticipated to offer contributions to theory by strengthening how the Information Adoption Model (IAM) is applied, in addition to practical contributions consisting of recommendations for brands in the skincare sector when designing more impactful UGC-based digital promotion strategies on TikTok.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a quantitative explanatory design to examine the influence exerted by User-Generated Content (UGC) toward buying intention for skincare items among TikTok users in Indonesia. This population consisted of currently active TikTok users aged 18 years and above residing in Indonesia, which based on DataReportal (2026), was estimated at approximately 180,000,000 users. Screening criteria were applied to ensure respondents had seen or interacted with UGC skincare content on TikTok within the past three months, so that only qualified respondents were included in the final sample.

The minimum sample size for this study was determined through an a priori power analysis rather than the Slovin formula, in order to provide a statistically grounded justification consistent with the requirements of PLS-SEM analysis. Using a medium effect size $f^2 = 0.15$ (Hair et al., 2021), an alpha level of .05, a statistical power of .95, and one predictor variable, the minimum required sample size was 89 respondents, a threshold further supported by the recommendation that a sample of around 200 respondents is commonly used as a reference point in SEM modeling (Nurhalizah et al., 2023). The selection method used was non-probability purposive sampling, chosen because the researcher's access to the entire population of TikTok users in Indonesia was limited, so that respondents were selected based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. Respondents were required to meet five eligibility criteria, namely (1) residing in Indonesia, (2) possessing an active TikTok account, (3) having seen or interacted with UGC skincare content on TikTok within the past three months, (4) being at least 18 years old, and (5) being willing to participate and complete the questionnaire in full. Data were collected online through a self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google Form from June to July 2026. Eligibility was verified at the beginning of the questionnaire through a set of screening questions corresponding to these criteria, and the form was configured so that any respondent answering "No" to a screening question was automatically prevented from proceeding, thereby excluding ineligible respondents before the main questionnaire began. A target sample size of 200 respondents was set prior to data collection, consistent with the power analysis and the SEM sample size reference described above. Data collection was stopped once this target was reached, resulting in 206 completed responses at closure, of which the 200 earliest-received responses meeting all eligibility criteria were retained for the final analysis, while the six responses received after the target was met were excluded.

Prior to completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed that their identity and responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for academic purposes, and that

their participation was entirely voluntary. By proceeding to complete the questionnaire, respondents provided informed consent to participate under these conditions. The questionnaire was also reviewed and approved by the thesis supervisor prior to distribution, confirming that the instrument items were appropriate and ready for use, thereby serving as a form of expert judgment for the research instrument. This study seeks to determine the link connecting the predictor variable, User-Generated Content (X), as well as the dependent variable, specifically Purchase Intention, denoted as Y. The researcher illustrates that relationship through a conceptual research framework, presented in Figure 1.

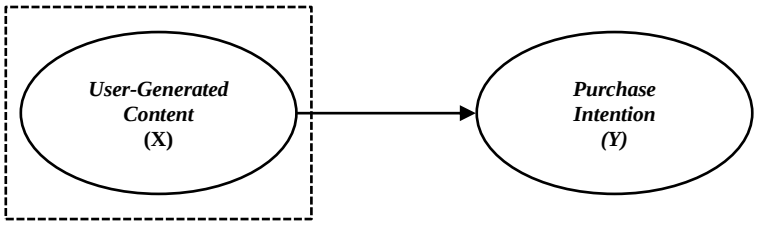


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The data collection tool took the shape of a structured survey comprising two main constructs. User-Generated Content (X) was measured through four dimensions (Content Authenticity, Content Interestingness, Content Usefulness, and Content Valence), which were adapted from the work of Luo and Lee as cited by Khayani et al. (2025), an approach consistent with prior TikTok-based studies that likewise apply the Information Adoption Model to explain how users evaluate and adopt UGC-based information prior to forming purchase-related intentions (Iskamto & Zumarnis, 2024). The Purchase Intention variable (Y) was measured through four dimensions (Transactional Intention, Referential Intention, Preferential Intention, and Explorative Intention) adapted from Augustine et al. (2026). In total, the instrument consisted of 24 statement items measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 denoting strongly disagree through 5 denoting strongly agree). As both source instruments were originally developed and validated in Indonesian, no additional translation process was required, and the items were adapted to fit the context of skincare-related UGC on TikTok. In addition to the questionnaire, documentation study served as a supporting technique, drawing on scientific articles, journals, and official statistical reports to strengthen the theoretical foundation and contextual background of this research.

The analysis of the data was carried out employing the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling approach (PLS-SEM) via the SmartPLS 4.0 program, a technique chosen on the grounds that it does not demand a strong underlying theory, permits certain parametric assumptions to be relaxed, and remains appropriate for models involving comparatively small sample sizes (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023). The UGC construct was specified as a first-order reflective construct measured directly by twelve reflective indicators representing four underlying content dimensions (Content Authenticity, Content Interestingness, Content Usefulness, and Content Valence), consistent with the item-level loading evaluation used in the validity testing. The evaluation encompassed the outer model, assessed by means of convergent validity (as reflected in outer loading and AVE), discriminant validity (assessed via cross loading, the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as well as HTMT), and reliability (measured through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability), together with the structural model, comprising R-Square, effect magnitude (F-Square), predictive power (PLSpredict and CVPAT), model fit (SRMR), and hypothesis testing through bootstrapping using 5,000 resample iterations, applying a t-value threshold of ≥ 1.96, together with a p-value of ≤ 0.05 as the significance criteria.

TikTok was chosen as the research setting because it is among the most widely used platforms for skincare marketing in Indonesia, with a large population of users exposed to UGC,

making it a fitting context for examining how UGC influences consumers' purchase intention toward skincare products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondents Characteristic

Participants involved in this research consisted of TikTok users domiciled in Indonesia. Data were collected using Google Forms distributed online, with a total of 200 respondents retained for analysis out of 206 responses received, exceeding the minimum sample size of 89 respondents indicated by the a priori power analysis. The data collection yielded the following results:

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	64	32.00%
	Female	136	68.00%
Total		200	100.00%
Age	18–20 years	9	4.50%
	21–25 years	147	73.50%
	26–30 years	39	19.50%
	31–35 years	3	1.50%
	> 35 years	2	1.00%
Total		200	100.00%
Occupation	Student	136	68.00%
	Private Employee	45	22.50%
	Entrepreneur	15	7.50%
	Civil Servant/Military/Police	4	2.00%
Total		200	100.00%
Daily TikTok Usage	< 1 hour	17	8.50%
	1–2 hours	55	27.50%
	3–4 hours	77	38.50%
	5–6 hours	32	16.00%
	> 6 hours	19	9.50%
Total		200	100.00%
Purchase after UGC exposure	Yes	155	77.50%
	No	45	22.50%
Total		200	100.00%

According to Table 1, most respondents were female (68.00%), aged 21–25 years (73.50%), reflecting the dominance of Generation Z among TikTok users exposed to skincare UGC, and were predominantly students (68.00%) who used the platform 3–4 hours per day (38.50%). A majority (77.50%) reported having purchased a skincare product after watching UGC content; these figures are descriptive in nature and should be interpreted merely as an initial indication of a relationship, not as statistical evidence of an effect, which is examined separately through hypothesis testing.

Statistical Test Results

This study's data underwent analysis through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), applying SmartPLS 4.0 in order to examine how User-Generated Content influences Purchase Intention. The accuracy and consistency of the measurement items were

examined through an outer assessment framework, whereas the relationship at the structural level linking the two constructs was assessed by means of the inner model (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023).

Outer Model Testing

Convergent validity was assessed via outer loadings, with all 24 indicators exceeding the 0.70 cutoff, confirming that each indicator adequately reflected its construct (Table 2).

Table 2. Validity Test Results (Convergent Validity)

Variable	Purchase Intention (Y)	User-Generated Content (X)	Validity
X.10		0.878	Valid
X.11		0.898	Valid
X.12		0.856	Valid
X.2		0.741	Valid
X.3		0.835	Valid
X.4		0.861	Valid
X.5		0.788	Valid
X.6		0.883	Valid
X.7		0.865	Valid
X.8		0.865	Valid
X.9		0.820	Valid
Y.1	0.782		Valid
Y.10	0.840		Valid
Y.11	0.862		Valid
Y.12	0.864		Valid
Y.2	0.809		Valid
Y.3	0.779		Valid
Y.4	0.793		Valid
Y.5	0.820		Valid
Y.6	0.802		Valid
Y.7	0.807		Valid
Y.8	0.810		Valid
Y.9	0.808		Valid
X.1		0.865	Valid

AVE values for both variables also exceeded the 0.50 benchmark, further supporting convergent validity (Table 3).

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	Criterion	AVE
Purchase Intention (Y)	> 0.50	0.665
User-Generated Content (X)	> 0.50	0.718

Discriminant validity received further confirmation via three complementary approaches: cross-loading values, the Fornell–Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (also referred to as HTMT), each of which satisfied the required thresholds. Additionally, reliability indices consisting of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (rho_a and rho_c) computed for both variables exceeded the minimum value of 0.70 (see Table 4), it should be noted that both reliability values exceeded 0.95, a level that may indicate a degree of item redundancy (Hair et al., 2021); however, given that discriminant validity was also satisfied across all three criteria described above, the measurement model was retained without further item reduction.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Construct	Criterion	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Composite Reliability

			(rho_a)	(rho_c)
Purchase Intention (Y)	≥ 0.70	0.954	0.955	0.960
User-Generated Content (X)	≥ 0.70	0.964	0.966	0.968

Inner Model Testing

An analysis pertaining to the coefficient of determination (R^2) has been conducted to assess the extent to which Purchase Intention is represented by User-Generated Content. A resulting R-Square value of 0.265 was obtained; based on criteria set out by Prasetiyo (2025), it is classified as weak, suggesting that the UGC explains 26.5% of the variance in Purchase Intention, whereas the remaining 73.5% is accounted for by variables beyond the scope of this model. These results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. R-Square (R^2) Test Results

Dependent Variable	R-Square (R^2)	R-Square Adjusted
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.265	0.261

F-Square, understood as the effect size, was subsequently computed in order to gauge to what extent UGC influences Purchase Intention. A resulting f^2 value equal to 0.02 signifies a minor effect, while a value of 0.15 corresponds to a moderate effect and 0.35 corresponds to a substantial effect (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023). These findings are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6. Effect Size (f^2) Test Results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Effect Size (f^2)	Interpretation
User-Generated Content (X)	Purchase Intention (Y)	0.360	Large Effect

Even though the R-Square figure remains comparatively weak, an F-Square result reaching 0.360 places it within the large-effect category, suggesting that UGC remains a meaningful predictor of purchase intention, notwithstanding its limited contribution to the model's overall variance, most of which is accounted for by other, unmeasured factors. Corroborating this, the PLSpredict evaluation yielded a Q^2predict value of 0.254 (exceeding zero) along with RMSE/PLS figures that stayed within the Linear Model benchmark across all 12 Purchase Intention indicators. Likewise, the CVPAT test, conducted in line with the predictive model assessment procedure developed by Sharma et al. (2023), revealed significant negative loss differences ($p < .001$) relative to both the Indicator Average and Linear Model benchmarks, together affirming the model's adequate predictive relevance. In addition, the goodness-of-fit test produced an SRMR figure of 0.035, comfortably under the 0.08 threshold, pointing to a good overall model fit.

Hypothesis Testing

Testing of the hypotheses was performed using path coefficient assessment along with a bootstrapping procedure involving 5,000 resample iterations, aimed at evaluating how significant the relationship between the two variables was; the corresponding results appear within Table 7.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results (Path Coefficient Analysis)

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	SE	t-Statistic	95% CI	p-Value	Conclusion
User-Generated Content (X) → Purchase Intention (Y)	0.515	0.060	8.533	[0.394, 0.631]	< .001	Significant

The bootstrapping results reveal that the UGC variable demonstrates a favorable and statistically significant relationship with Purchase Intention, evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.515 (SE = 0.060, 95% CI [0.394, 0.631]), a t-value of 8.533, and a p-value below .001. Because this computed t-value exceeds the threshold of 1.96, together with the p-value remaining below 0.05, Ha1 is accepted and $H0_1$ is rejected, meaning that greater quality and intensity of UGC

encountered by TikTok users corresponds to a stronger tendency to develop purchase intention toward the featured products.

The Influence of User-Generated Content on Purchase Intention

The findings confirm that UGC exerts a favorable and meaningful effect on purchase intention for skincare products on TikTok, consistent with the Information Adoption Model (IAM), in which argument quality (reflected in Content Usefulness and Content Interestingness) and source credibility (reflected in Content Authenticity) jointly shape how audiences value information and, in turn, form purchase intention.

When examined at the dimension level, respondents rated Content Valence the highest on average (mean = 3.97), followed by Content Usefulness (3.96) and Content Interestingness (3.95), while Content Authenticity received the lowest mean score (3.93). These mean scores describe respondents' relative perceptions across dimensions and should not be read as evidence of each dimension's individual effect on purchase intention, since the model in this study tests UGC as a single overall construct rather than at the level of its four dimensions. The comparatively lower score for Content Authenticity may point to a degree of residual skepticism among audiences regarding the authenticity of creators' opinions. Such findings align with those reported by Andriansyah et al. (2025) and Puspitasari and Aruan (2023), who likewise found that UGC characterized by high credibility and informative content stimulates consumer purchase intention, a mechanism further supported by Zakaria et al. (2024) through the mediating roles of perceived usefulness and perceived trust, as well as by Simamora and Suryani (2025) in the context of TikTok-based skincare marketing more broadly, although the current study confines this relationship to the narrower context of skincare products on TikTok.

At the same time, the comparatively modest R-Square figure of 26.5% shows that UGC is not the sole determinant of purchase intention, consistent with Aini and Dakwah (2025), who found that UGC's influence is not always dominant when factors such as brand image or product quality play a larger role. Nevertheless, the large F-Square value (0.360) confirms that UGC's effect remains meaningful, even though its overall contribution to the variance in purchase intention is partial.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on these findings, the present study establishes that User-Generated Content is positively and significantly associated with the purchase intention held by TikTok users toward skincare items, a conclusion supported by the bootstrapping results (path coefficient of 0.515, SE = 0.060, 95% CI [0.394, 0.631], t = 8.533, $p < .001$) that lead to the acceptance of hypothesis Ha1. In other words, TikTok users exposed to higher-quality UGC tend to report a greater tendency toward purchase intention for the skincare products being showcased, although this cross-sectional design does not permit causal inference. That said, an R-Square value of 0.265 reveals that UGC accounts for merely 26.5% of the variance observed in purchase intention, a proportion classified as weak, which suggests that UGC functions as one among several contributing factors rather than the sole one, alongside variables such as brand image and product quality that lie beyond this model's scope (Aini & Dakwah, 2025). Even so, an F-Square figure of 0.360, situated within the large-effect classification, indicates that the contribution of UGC remains meaningful and merits continued attention. Such results align with the work of Andriansyah et al. (2025) and Puspitasari and Aruan (2023) both of whom likewise reported that UGC characterized by strong credibility and informative content encourages consumers' purchase intention. From a descriptive standpoint, the UGC variable yielded a mean score of 3.95, placing it in the High category, with Content Valence emerging as its highest-scoring dimension and Content Authenticity as the lowest, whereas Purchase Intention obtained a mean of 3.37, falling into the Moderate category, headed by

Transactional Intention and followed last by Referential Intention. In addition, these results lend support to the conceptual model known as the Information Adoption Model (IAM) (Iskamto & Zumarnis, 2024), which posits that individuals accept information on the basis of criteria encompassing argument quality and source credibility, two elements mirrored within the UGC dimensions investigated in this study. Accordingly, what sets this study apart is its emphasis on how UGC shapes consumers' intention to buy amid a particular setting of skincare products on TikTok, while the present findings also suggest that future research consider accounting for supplementary factors, such as brand trust and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which were not examined in this study, to further deepen the understanding of digital consumer behavior in this context.

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