

The Effects of SMIs' Source Credibility on Consumers' Intention to Purchase Local Cosmetic Products Through Attitude Towards Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

The global influencer marketing industry, valued at USD 21.1 billion in 2023, has gained immense relevance for businesses, with Social Media Influencers (SMI) playing a pivotal role in marketing activities. In the competitive Malaysian local cosmetic industry, leveraging SMIs is particularly promising, given their substantial influence on consumer buying behaviour due to their credibility traits. By extending Ohanian's (year) seminal 3-dimensional source credibility model, this research employs a 4-dimensional framework tailored to the context of SMIs. Through the purposive sampling technique, this study managed to collect 164 responses via self-administered questionnaires among young adults in the age range of 18–34 years old. Data were analysed using the structural equation modelling-partial least squares (PLS-SEM) method. Findings from this research suggest that SMIs' trustworthiness and attractiveness affect consumers' purchase intention through the mediating effects of attitude towards advertisements, while expertise and similarity do not. Essentially, the findings from this study contribute to the existing literature on SMIs' credibility traits, offering valuable insights for local cosmetic industry stakeholders in their selection for product endorsements.

Keywords: Attitude toward advertising, influencer marketing, purchase intention, social media influencer, source credibility model

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of the Internet has significantly affected the power dynamic between businesses and consumers (Evans, 2019). Thanks to the easy and quick sharing

of content in various forms on social media platforms, consumers are now able to share their opinions and feedback on various products and services, effectively transforming them into potential brand advocates (Vrontis et al., 2021). This eventually led to the emergence of Social Media Influencers (SMIs), one of the distinguished phenomena under the light of influencer marketing.

According to Geysler (2023), the market for influencer marketing was projected to reach USD 21.1 billion in 2023. Consequently, many companies have shown a growing inclination towards adopting SMIs as a marketing tool to reach and interact with target markets (Masuda et al., 2022). A survey conducted by Influencer Marketing Hub also reported that more than 80% of the respondents intended to allocate a budget to influencer marketing in 2023, with 67% planning to increase their influencer marketing spend. In addition, academic research also showed support for this trend, with studies demonstrating the significant impact of SMIs on media coverage, consumer purchase persuasion (Kurdi et al., 2022), and advertisement effectiveness (Schouten et al., 2020).

SMIs hold significant relevance in today's marketing landscape primarily due to their propensity to demonstrate authenticity, a trait highly sought after by consumers. Their direct engagement with audiences via postings and comments further enhances their appeal (Fertik, 2020). SMIs are also viewed as trustworthy sources, making them reliable for delivering

credible messages (Suciu, 2020). It is driven by the fact that many SMIs are portrayed as ordinary individuals, making their promotional content seem more authentic and relatable (Duffy, 2020). Recognising these advantages, many brands and businesses now incorporate SMIs into their marketing strategies (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, despite the apparent evidence of SMIs' capabilities to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, there are some issues and concerns regarding this matter. For instance, consumers have become increasingly sceptical about SMIs' reliability in promoting products, mainly due to the perception of dishonesty and inauthenticity (Suciu, 2020). A similar issue has also been addressed by Yuan and Lou (2020), who implied that some may still be wary of influencers who advocate products or services they do not actually use or believe in. Thus, it is imperative for businesses to carefully select SMI endorsers who possess a high level of credibility so they can effectively convey their message to a targeted audience.

For influencers and content marketing messages to be effective, social media influencers should possess credibility, which is the most crucial characteristic. For instance, a survey by IZEA (2017) revealed that the credibility or believability of the source/writer was rated the highest, with 69% as the most important attribute. Similarly, Balaban and Mustăţea (2019) also emphasised the importance of source credibility as a key attribute for SMIs. In

addition, Chekima et al. (2020) suggest that using credible SMIs can be powerful, especially for consumers who struggle to comprehend a product.

However, despite the apparent evidence of SMIs' capabilities in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions, studies on characteristics of SMIs that contribute to the effectiveness of promotional messages are still relatively scarce (Duh & Thabethe, 2021). In the same vein, Taillon et al. (2020) asserted that there has been minimal research on how SMIs connect with and affect their followers, indicating the need for further empirical validation and theoretical knowledge in this field of research. Furthermore, there is a significant research gap on the dynamics of SMIs on TikTok despite its burgeoning prominence within the field of influencer marketing. Previous scholarly investigations have predominantly focused on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, thereby overlooking TikTok's distinctive features. Moreover, the scholarly discourse on source credibility in influencer marketing has predominantly revolved around celebrity endorsements, thereby neglecting the unique credibility attributes inherent to SMIs.

The research on cosmetic purchase intentions in Malaysia has mostly focused on types of cosmetic products such as green, halal, and Korean cosmetics. However, studies focusing on local cosmetic products are notably lacking. Studies on SMIs' credibility predominantly use Ohanian's (1990) 3-dimensional Source Credibility Model (trustworthiness, expertise,

attractiveness) (e.g., AlFarraj et al., 2021; Koay et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2023; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). While this model has strong empirical support, it was originally developed for celebrity endorsers and thus may not fully capture the unique dynamics of SMIs. Addressing this, Munnukka et al. (2016) recommended incorporating "similarity" into the model, given that SMIs are often perceived as ordinary individuals who share similar demographic characteristics with their followers (Duffy, 2020). Despite its relevance, this characteristic has been understudied. Moreover, previous research indicates the potential intermediary variables in the relationship between source credibility and purchase intention. In line with Vrontis et al.'s (2021) recommendations to include mediating or moderating variables, this study introduces attitude towards advertisements as a mediating variable.

Hence, by drawing on Source Credibility Theory, this study aims to narrow the gaps mentioned by explaining consumers' local cosmetic purchase intention through the credibility characteristics of SMIs. The local cosmetic industry is chosen because it is known to be profitable and lucrative in Malaysia. SMIs are acknowledged to be especially effective in endorsing beauty and personal care products (Statista, 2023). In particular, this study examines the effects of source credibility dimensions, namely, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, and Similarity. This study will also test the mediating effect of attitude towards advertisement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Influencers (SMI)

Social media influencers (SMIs) have gained popularity by being active on various social media platforms and attracting many followers (Khamis et al., 2017; Yuan & Lou, 2020). They have established their personal brand, often by sharing content about fashion, beauty, travel, and other matters that stimulate inspiration and aspiration (Khamis et al., 2017). SMIs are known to be able to exert influence over their followers (Ki et al., 2020), essentially making them a preferred choice in the current marketing landscape.

The popularity of SMIs has been growing exponentially. They are now a familiar presence among consumers, particularly in Malaysia. A recent statistic from Statista (2023a) revealed that 79% of Malaysian respondents are aware of SMIs and follow them, with the majority admitting having made purchases because an influencer has endorsed it. The effectiveness of SMIs' promotional messages was evident, and it is especially prominent when beauty or personal care products are being promoted (Statista, 2023b). While SMIs are acknowledged to be a powerful marketing tool, there is still a lack of understanding of how SMIs initially acquire their persuasive power and be able to partner with brands and create branded contents that include endorsements (Ki et al., 2020).

To date, TikTok is known to be one of the biggest platforms for influencer marketing. Although it is considered relatively smaller compared to more established platforms

like Facebook, its prospects are highly promising (Haenlein et al., 2020). As a start, TikTok outshines other platforms in terms of engagement rates (Green et al., 2020). Additionally, a WARC (2021) survey reported that 80% of TikTok users claimed the platform had helped them get ideas about brands and products they had never thought of before. Furthermore, a survey conducted by Adweek in 2021 revealed that 49% of users admit having purchased a product after seeing it advertised, promoted, or reviewed at least once on TikTok (Lundstrom, 2021). Following this, TikTok has consolidated its position as a dominant platform for influencer marketing due to its exponential growth, outstanding engagement rates and impact on consumers' decision-making.

Source Credibility

The Source Credibility Theory introduced by Hovland et al. (1953) asserted that the persuasiveness of a message is higher when the source presents itself as credible (Umeogu, 2012). In this context, credibility refers to the believability of the information provided and its source (Ayeh et al., 2013). This facet is important in determining the message's authenticity and validity (Hsieh & Li, 2020). Extant studies have been undertaken to put this notion to the test, and most of them confirmed that source credibility significantly contributes to message believability, which ultimately elevates the message's persuasiveness (Pornpitakpan, 2004).

Marketing and advertising practitioners abide by the same notion, which suggests

that a message's persuasiveness depends on the communicator's character (Ohanian, 1990). More specifically, under the light of influencer marketing, studies indicated that the credibility characteristics of an influencer have the capabilities to influence a person's beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviour (Hassan et al., 2021; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020). Fundamentally, when consumers believe that a source has greater credibility than other sources, they will be more receptive towards the messages coming from the source and more likely to be persuaded.

The Source Credibility Model is commonly used as an enhancer tool to measure the credibility of endorsers, which comprises trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Initially developed by Hovland and Weiss (1951) and then segregated by Ohanian (1990), researchers widely used this model to examine the effects of the source credibility of celebrity endorsers on consumers' attitudes. Earlier studies demonstrated that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness significantly affected the attitude towards advertising, attitude towards brands, and intention to purchase (Amos et al., 2008; Halder et al., 2021).

As social media thrives, most companies transitioned towards using SMIs to promote products (Chekima et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020). This is also supplemented by the fact that the dependency on social media in communicating is increasing while it proceeds to shift how consumers interact with brands (Koay et al., 2021). The traditional influence of trustworthiness,

expertise, and attractiveness has increasingly been examined in the context of SMIs (Weismueller et al., 2020).

In light of influencer endorsement, Munnukka et al. (2016) developed a 4-dimensional Source Credibility Model consisting of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and one new dimension, similarity. The inclusion of similarity is proposed as a higher degree of similarity encourages a more positive attitude towards the advertised brand, hence greater advertising effectiveness (Munnukka et al., 2016).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be referred to as the degree of confidence, acceptance, and trust of recipients in the honesty, integrity, and reliability of information or advice provided (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Munnukka et al., 2016; Ohanian, 1990;). A source is considered trustworthy when the information and recommendations are valid, honest, and explicit (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). People are usually sceptical of information coming from untrustworthy sources (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), whereas information from trustworthy sources is frequently accepted with no questions (Sparkman Jr & Locander, 1980). Earlier marketing research conducted in the realm of celebrity endorsers had consistently found that trustworthiness positively affects advertising effectiveness (e.g., Amos et al., 2008; Till & Shimp, 1998), signifying the foundational significance of trustworthiness in advertising efficacy.

Under the light of influencer marketing, trustworthiness towards SMIs was dubbed crucial in making internet influencers more influential (Jin et al., 2019). When consumers trust an influencer, they are more likely to like the brands the influencer endorses (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019; Weidmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Furthermore, when influencers are perceived as trustworthy, consumers will likely trust their recommendations to be genuine and reliable (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Consequently, this led to a positive attitude towards the brand or product being promoted by the influencer (Ki et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Shoukat et al., 2023). Recent studies empirically supported this notion (e.g., Chekima et al., 2020; Janssen et al., 2022). These studies particularly implied that advertisement content from trustworthy influencers is more likely to be viewed positively. As such, in this study, we propose that when TikTok influencers are perceived as trustworthy, their followers will have a favourable attitude toward the content they share on TikTok. Based on these discussions, we propose the following:

H1: TikTok Influencers' trustworthiness positively affects consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement.

Expertise

Expertise can be described as the level of knowledge, abilities, and qualifications of an endorser, which reflects their depth of expertise and perceived ability to effectively market a product (Van der Walddt et al.,

2009). One is considered an expert when one possesses extensive knowledge, practical experience, excellent problem-solving skills, specialised expertise in a specific domain, is perceived as knowledgeable and has undergone appropriate training and experience (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Muda & Hamzah, 2020; Verma & Dewani, 2020; Weidmann & van Mettenheim, 2020). Most previous studies in commercial settings suggest that a source with a high level of expertise leads to a positive attitude towards the endorser and advertisement, as well as greater purchase intention (Pornpitakpan, 2004). People generally perceive an expert as someone highly qualified and more likely to make an accurate and valid assessment. For this reason, consumers tend to accept the content or recommendations offered by influencers perceived as experts in the area of interest (Chetioui et al., 2020). Previous research has confirmed that people often rely on source expertise when forming attitudes (Zhu et al., 2020). The notion was empirically tested and proven to be significant in studies involving several types of influencers, such as fashion influencers on social media (e.g., Chetioui et al., 2020), Youtubers (e.g., Miranda et al., 2021) and vloggers (e.g., Choi & Lee, 2019). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that TikTok influencers who demonstrate their expertise in their TikTok videos are more likely to garner positive attitudes from viewers. Building on the existing literature, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: TikTok Influencers' expertise positively affects consumers' attitudes toward advertisements.

Attractiveness

Physical appearance is vital and hardly goes unnoticed (Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Attractiveness is a part of perceived credibility sources and has been considered a critical success factor for influencers (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019). As one of the dimensions of source credibility, attractiveness determines whether a source is good-looking (Weidmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Using physically attractive endorsers will positively influence attitudes toward advertisements as people associate positive qualities like success, health, social status, likeability, and trustworthiness with attractive individuals (Schouten et al., 2020). Additionally, the level of message persuasiveness is higher when conveyed by attractive influencers (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Koay et al. (2021) also suggested that consumers' intention to purchase is highly influenced by the attractiveness factor, especially when it comes to SMIs with visually appealing appearance, as it garners more public attention and fosters extensive publicity. This implied that an endorser's physical attractiveness is crucial in enhancing advertising effectiveness.

Previous research found that endorsers' attractiveness positively influences advertising credibility when the product endorsed is related to physical appearance (Munnukka et al., 2016). Furthermore,

beauty and attractiveness are significant factors when selecting models, endorsers, and spokespersons, especially in the cosmetic industry (Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Schouten et al. (2020) concluded that the effectiveness of advertisements for fitness and beauty products was much more significant when the endorser was psychically attractive and perceived as a good fit for the product endorsed. In essence, this implies that using attractive influencers to promote products that enhance physical appearance (i.e., cosmetic products) may yield favourable attitudes from consumers; hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: TikTok Influencers' expertise positively affects consumers' attitudes toward the advertisement.

Similarity

Similarity, also known as homophily, refers to the perceived resemblance between the sender and receiver, including shared characteristics, such as opinions, education, or social standing (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Kiecker & Cowles, 2002; Ladhari et al., 2020; Martensen et al., 2018). It plays an important role in source credibility because communicators perceived as similar to their audiences are more likely to be viewed as credible and persuasive than those perceived as dissimilar (Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008; Simons et al., 1970;). In addition, Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) postulated that people are more likely to feel similar to characters who share similar demographic characteristics, as well as deeper, less obvious personal

traits, such as personality, behaviour, or life experience, essentially stimulating the desire to become more like the character in other ways. Notably, it became one of the most critical traits in marketing efforts, as it can generate favourable attitudes toward advertisements or brands (Chang, 2011). It has been affirmed and verified by recent studies in influencer marketing (e.g., Lou & Yuan, 2019; Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019; Suwandee et al., 2019; Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Ultimately, these studies suggested that people perceived as similar tend to be considered credible sources of information. Thus, information or suggestions coming from these individuals are more likely to be accepted. Based on the above suggestions, we propose the following:

H4: TikTok Influencers' perceived similarity positively affects consumers' attitudes toward the advertisement.

The Mediating Role of Attitude Towards Advertisement

Attitude is a person's favourable or unfavourable reaction towards an object, person, institution, or any aspect that can be discriminated against in a person's world (Ajzen, 1989). "People who hold positive attitudes should engage in behaviours that approach, support or enhance the attitude object, and people who hold negative attitude should engage in behaviours that avoid, oppose, or hinder the object" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.155). Meanwhile, attitude towards an advertisement refers to a person's predisposition to respond

favourably or unfavourably to a certain advertisement under a specific exposure setting (McKenzie et al., 1986). It captures the thoughts and feelings of consumers towards a certain advertisement (Kirmani & Campbell, 2009).

Given its predictive relevance to consumers' behaviours, marketers have paid close attention to the concept of attitude towards advertisement (Gaber et al., 2019), leading to its widespread usage as an indicator in measuring advertising performance (Oumlil & Balloun, 2019). Most studies on influencer marketing in different settings have consistently implied that credibility traits, such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity, significantly influenced consumers' attitudes, specifically towards SMIs, contents shared online, and the endorsed products or brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Mathur et al., 2021). Furthermore, attitude was also acknowledged as a central mediator of behaviour and preceding behavioural intention, with a growing body of literature supporting its significance as a driver of purchasing intention via established theories, such as TRA, TPB, and TAM (Ing & Ming, 2018; Muda & Hamzah (2021). It suggests that credibility characteristics influence consumers' attitudes and play a role in determining their intent to purchase (Lim et al., 2017; Nafees et al., 2021). Therefore, based on these discussions, we propose these hypotheses:

H5: Consumer attitude towards advertisement mediates the relationship between TikTok influencers' trustworthiness and purchase intention.

H6: Consumer attitude towards advertisement mediates the relationship between TikTok influencers' expertise and purchase intention.

H7: Consumer attitude towards advertisement mediates the relationship between TikTok influencers' expertise and purchase intention.

H8: Consumer attitude towards advertisement mediates the relationship between TikTok influencers' perceived similarity and purchase intention.

Attitude Towards Advertisement and Purchase Intention

According to Kim and Ko (2012), purchase intention is an attitudinal determinant in predicting customers' future contributions to a brand. It is important to study consumers' purchase intention as it is key in predicting consumers' actions (Chakraborty, 2019). This study assesses the consumers' intention to purchase local cosmetic products in Malaysia. The growing awareness of the importance of physical appearance in many life outcomes has increased societal emphasis on personal appearance. This has led to increased demand for cosmetics, which have been found to enhance and improve physical attractiveness (Mohammed et al., 2021). A similar circumstance is also apparent in Malaysia, where the cosmetic industry thrives from year to year. A group of

society known as 'beauty enthusiasts often favour brands like Maybelline, L'Oreal, or Estee Lauder. On the other hand, younger generations tend to favour beauty products originating from South Korea (Badarudin, 2018). Along these lines, none mentioned local Malaysian cosmetic products, calling for a study of consumers' intention to purchase local cosmetic products.

Muda and Hamzah (2021) stressed the importance of understanding consumers' attitudes as they influence behavioural intentions such as purchase intention. Besides, an attitude was propounded as a definite antecedent of behavioural intentions (Ing & Ming, 2018). Accordingly, attitudes towards a particular thing should lead to relevant behaviour towards the same thing (Brown & Stayman, 1992). It aligns with Ajzen's (1991) belief that a more favourable attitude towards a particular behaviour will lead to a stronger intention to perform the behaviour under consideration. Notably, this proposition was validated and confirmed by several studies in different contexts, such as consumers' purchase intention in restaurants (Najar & Rather, 2021), purchase intention towards bubble tea (Kamalul Ariffin et al., 2021), and online purchase intention (Mathur et al., 2021). Hence, based on the above discussion, we postulate the following:

H9: Consumer attitude toward advertisements positively influences purchase intention.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework and the corresponding hypotheses based on the literature discussed.

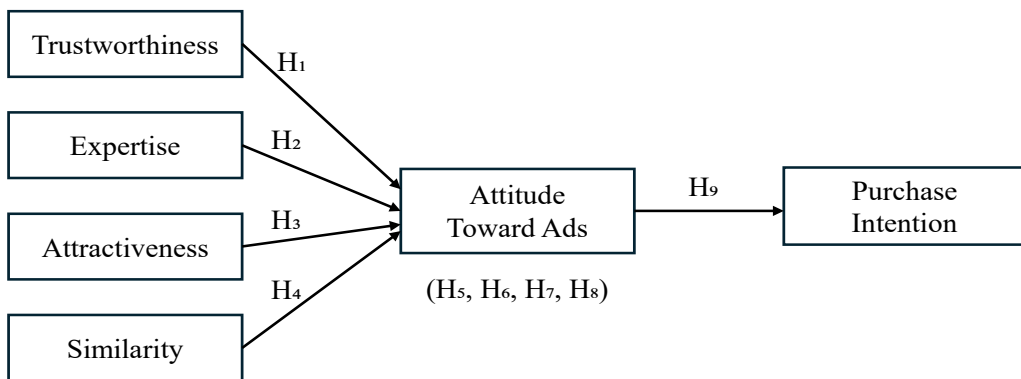


Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Authors' work

METHODS

Data Collection Procedure

The data of this study were collected using self-administered questionnaires via Google Forms. Based on the study context, the target respondents were assumed to generally have access to the Internet. Hence, Google Forms was used to distribute the questionnaires. In ensuring that the scales achieve a satisfactory level of validity and reliability, the questionnaire was validated by three experts who were lecturers from Universiti Teknologi Mara; it had also undergone pre-testing prior to the actual data collection.

The target population of this study are social media users. In specific, the sampling frame is TikTok users. TikTok was selected over other social media platforms for this study for several reasons. First, it enjoys high popularity and engagement among the target demographic of young adults aged 18 to 34, who are the primary users of TikTok (Iqbal, 2024; Statista, 2024). Second, despite being relatively new,

TikTok has proven highly effective in influencer marketing due to its algorithm that significantly boosts the visibility of SMIs, thereby amplifying their reach and impact on consumer behaviour (Geysler, 2024). Third, surveys show that most TikTok users discover new brands on the platforms and subsequently purchase products after seeing them promoted (Lundstrom, 2021; WARC, 2021). Fourth, TikTok's unique features, such as duets, stitches, and trends, enhance creative content creation, setting it apart from other platforms. Finally, TikTok's growing influence in Malaysia's cosmetic industry makes it particularly relevant for this study, ensuring the findings directly apply to industry stakeholders (Iqbal, 2024). Hence, this study focuses on TikTok users to explore the platform's unique influence on consumer behaviour.

The respondents underwent three screening questions to ensure eligibility to fill in the questionnaire, as required by the purposive sampling technique employed in this study. The screening questions are: (1) Are you currently an active user of TikTok?

(2) Have you followed/subscribed to any influencers on TikTok that featured local cosmetic products in their postings? and (3) Have you ever bought any local cosmetic products because an influencer on TikTok recommended it? Eligible respondents were chosen based on those who answered 'Yes' to the first two questions and 'No' to the third question. The link to the Google questionnaire was distributed through several social media platforms, which took place between 5th November 2022 and 9th January 2023. The Google Survey managed to collect 164 valid responses.

Sample Size and Respondent Profile

This study focuses on Malaysian consumers aged between 18 and 34 because people from this age group are known to be dominant TikTok users (Statista, 2024). As the specific sampling frame was not accessible, *G*Power* software (with parameters $f^2 = 0.15$, power = 0.95, Alpha = 0.05, and predictors = 4) was employed to determine the minimum sample size required. Analysis using *G*Power* 3.1.9.7 software revealed that a minimum of 129 participants was necessary for this study. Hair et al. (2014, 2017) and Ringle et al. (2020) recommended using power analysis to determine sample sizes. Recent papers by prominent researchers, such as Memon et al. (2020), Cheah et al. (2019), and Yusliza et al. (2020), also utilised *G*Power* for sample size determination.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of this study. The majority of the respondents are female (87.2%). Most

respondents (79.9%) belonged to the age group of 18–24 years. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents are of Dusun ethnicity (28.3%). Most currently reside in Kota Kinabalu (65.8%), and 92.1% of the respondents were from Sabah and Sarawak. Students comprised the most respondents in this study (119 or 72.6%), with most having no monthly income (66.5%). Additionally, the majority of these respondents possess an STPM/Diploma or equivalent (48.8%), which is their highest educational level.

In regard to TikTok usage, the majority of the respondents admitted using TikTok for more than three hours daily (28.7%), and most of them claimed to watch TikTok videos that featured local cosmetic products a few times a day (30.5%). Also, skincare products are the most viewed on TikTok amongst the respondents (89%), followed by make-up products (65.9%) and fragrances (49.4%).

Measurement

The measurement scales used in this study were adapted and adopted from prior established studies, such as Muda and Hamzah (2021) for the trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness constructs, Munukka et al. (2016) for the similarity construct, Belanche et al. (2021) for attitude towards ad construct, and Muda and Hamzah (2021) for purchase intention construct. All these scales adopt a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Table 2 presents the constructs and measurement items used in this study.

Table 1
Demographics of respondents

Variable(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group		
18 to 24 years old	131	79.9
25 to 34 years old	33	20.1
Gender		
Male	21	12.8
Female	143	87.2
Ethnicity		
Kadazan	16	9.8
Dusun	39	23.8
Bajau	28	17.1
Bugis	11	6.7
Malay	31	18.9
Chinese	1	0.6
Indian	0	0
Others	38	23.2
Residential District		
Kota Kinabalu	108	65.9
Penampang	11	6.7
Tuaran	27	16.5
Papar	5	3.0
Others	13	7.9
Hometown		
Sabah & Sarawak	151	92.1
Northern States (Perlis/Perak/Kedah/Penang)	4	2.4
Southern States (Melaka/Johor)	3	1.8
Western States (Negeri Sembilan/Selangor)	4	2.4
Federal Territory (Kuala Lumpur/Putrajaya/ Labuan)	2	1.2
Employment Status		
Public sector employee	8	4.9
Private sector employee	24	14.6
Self-employed	9	5.5
Unemployed	4	2.4
Student	119	72.6
Monthly Income		
Below RM 1,500	23	14
RM 1, 501–RM 2,500	25	15.2
RM 2,501–RM 3,500	5	3
RM 3,500–RM 4,000	2	1.2
More than RM 4,001	0	0
Not applicable (e.g., unemployed/student)	109	66.5

Table 1 (Continue)

Variable(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Education Level		
SPM and below	27	16.5
STPM/Diploma or equivalent	80	48.8
Bachelors' Degree	57	34.8
Masters' Degree	0	0
Doctoral Degree	0	0
Time Spent on TikTok daily		
Less than 30 minutes	9	5.5
31 to 60 minutes	42	25.6
1 hour to 2 hours	44	26.8
2 hours to 3 hours	22	13.4
More than 3 hours	47	28.7
Frequency of Watching TikTok Videos Featuring Local Cosmetic Products		
Once a month	8	4.9
A few times a month	40	24.2
Once a week	10	6.1
A few times a week	47	28.7
Once a day	9	5.5
A few times a day	50	30.5
Types of Local Cosmetic Products Viewed on TikTok		
Skincare	146	89.0
Make-up	108	65.9
Body care	69	42.1
Haircare	79	48.2
Oral care	30	18.3
Fragrances	81	49.4

Source: Authors' work

Table 2

Research instrument

Construct/Items	Questions
Trustworthiness (TR)	
TR1	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is dependable.
TR2	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is honest.
TR3	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is reliable.
TR4	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is sincere.
TR5	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is trustworthy.

Table 2 (Continue)

Construct/Items	Questions
Expertise (EX)	
EX1	The influencer who reviews cosmetic products on TikTok is experienced in cosmetic products.
EX2	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is an expert in cosmetic products.
EX3	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is knowledgeable in cosmetic products.
EX4	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is qualified to offer cosmetic advice.
EX5	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is skilled in cosmetic products.
Attractiveness (ATT)	
ATT1	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is beautiful/good-looking.
ATT2	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is attractive.
ATT3	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is sexy.
ATT4	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is elegant/charming.
ATT5	The influencer who provides cosmetic product reviews on TikTok is glamorous.
Similarity (SM)	
SM1	The TikTok influencer and I have a lot in common.
SM2	The TikTok influencer and I are a lot alike.
SM3	I can easily identify with the TikTok influencer.
Attitude Toward Advertisement (AAD)	
AAD1	I think that this TikTok video posted by the influencer is interesting.
AAD2	I think that this TikTok video posted by the influencer is pleasant.

Table 2 (Continue)

Construct/Items	Questions
AAD3	I think that this TikTok video posted by the influencer is likeable.
AAD4	I have a favourable opinion about the TikTok video posted by the influencer.
Purchase Intention (PI)	
PI1	I intend to buy a local cosmetic product recommended by an influencer on TikTok in the near future.
PI2	I will likely purchase a local cosmetic product recommended by a TikTok influencer in the near future.
PI3	I would consider buying the local cosmetic product featured in the influencer's TikTok post.
PI4	My willingness to buy the local cosmetic product featured on influencers' posts on TikTok is high.
PI5	I will definitely buy local cosmetic products recommended by influencers on TikTok in the near future.

Source: Authors' work

Statistical Data Analysis

The study employs the PLS-SEM technique to analyse the research model and hypotheses. Specifically, SmartPLS 4.0 software was utilised to analyse the data attained from this study (Ringle et al., 2022). Initially, the outer model was used to assess the reliability and validity of all constructs. In the next part, the structural model was assessed to evaluate the significance of path coefficients (Hair et al., 2017).

Smart PLS 4.0 was used because the structure of PLS-SEM is designed to provide causal explanations; hence, it is deemed suitable for prediction-oriented research (Hair et al., 2019). Given that this research aims to examine the relationship between

trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness (causes), and consumers' attitude (mediator) to purchase local cosmetic products (effect), this tool is therefore used. In addition, this technique is recommended by Hair et al. (2017) for its ability to estimate sample size models with high statistical power.

Common Method Bias (CMB) and Common Method Variance (CMV)

The current study relies on self-reported data, which introduces susceptibility to CMB and CMV. Evaluating method bias to mitigate potential issues during subsequent data analysis phases is imperative. The Harman Single Factor Test was conducted, revealing that the primary factor accounted

for only 47.36% of the variance, which is less than 50%, indicating that common bias is not a concern in this study. Additionally, by incorporating a marker variable in the questionnaire, we compare the path coefficient (β) between the baseline model and the model, including the marker variable. We observed no significant differences in the values, with variances ranging between 0.000 and 0.002. Moreover, the change in R^2 without the marker variable (0.563) compared with the marker variable (0.564) was only 0.001, suggesting minimal impact. Consequently, based on these findings, it is reasonable to conclude that this study is not susceptible to either CMB or CMV.

RESULTS

First Step: Measurement Assessment of the Reflective Measurement Model (First-Order Construct)

First, the measurement model was evaluated to test the validity and reliability of the instruments using the guidelines by Hair et al. (2019) and Ramayah et al. (2018). This evaluation assessed the factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). Hair et al. (2019) recommend that factor loadings should be ≥ 0.708 to ensure that the construct explains a significant portion of the variance in the indicators. As shown in Table 3, all loadings meet this criterion except for one item (ATT3). The AVE, which indicates the average variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error, should be ≥ 0.5 . In this study, all AVE values exceeded

this threshold, with the lowest being 0.770, indicating that more than half of the observed variables were attributable to their respective factors. CR, which assesses the internal consistency of the construct, should be ≥ 0.7 . All CR values in this study were above this threshold, with the lowest at 0.930, indicating that all measurement items are reliable and internally consistent. A universally accepted norm for Cronbach's Alpha (α) value is a score of 0.6–0.7, which indicates an acceptable degree of reliability, and a score of 0.8 or higher indicates a very good level. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs range from 0.893 to 0.959, indicating that the constructs are effectively measuring their intended concepts. One item (ATT3) was deleted due to a loading value below ≥ 0.708 .

An HTMT analysis assessed discriminant validity by comparing correlations between different constructs with correlations within the same construct. This analysis confirms whether the constructs are distinct, ensuring that the measures used capture unique concepts and do not overlap or measure the same underlying construct. The established threshold proposed by Henseler et al. (2015) and updated by Franke and Sarstedt (2019) serves as a guideline for path models incorporating conceptually similar constructs. Accordingly, HTMT values should be equal to or less than 0.85, while the stricter and lenient mode criteria should be equal to or less than 0.90. As can be seen in Table 4, the highest value recorded was 0.752, lower than the stricter threshold of 0.85. As a result, it can be concluded that the

Table 3
Measurement model analysis

Construct/items	Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Trustworthiness		0.934	0.950	0.791
TR1	0.906			
TR2	0.885			
TR3	0.864			
TR4	0.923			
TR5	0.867			
Expertise		0.943	0.950	0.814
EX1	0.892			
EX2	0.915			
EX3	0.921			
EX4	0.904			
EX5	0.877			
Attractiveness		0.901	0.930	0.770
ATT1	0.850			
ATT2	0.924			
ATT3	Deleted			
ATT4	0.850			
ATT5	0.884			
Similarity		0.893	0.933	0.832
SM1	0.901			
SM2	0.927			
SM3	0.893			
Attitude Toward Ad		0.926	0.948	0.819
AAD1	0.894			
AAD2	0.933			
AAD3	0.926			
AAD4	0.866			
Purchase Intention		0.959	0.969	0.861
PI1	0.905			
PI2	0.935			
PI33	0.926			
PI4	0.949			
PI5	0.923			

Source: Authors' work

Table 4
Discriminant validity (HTMT)

	AAD	ATT	EX	PI	SM	TR
AAD						
ATT	0.653					
EX	0.611	0.469				
PI	0.710	0.512	0.588			
SM	0.556	0.310	0.677	0.639		
TR	0.722	0.522	0.752	0.741	0.706	

Source: Authors' work

respondents could differentiate the variables in this study. Conclusively, both validity tests reveal that the measuring items are valid and reliable.

Second Step: Assessment of the Structural Model (Hypotheses Testing)

Hypotheses Testing of the Direct Relationship

As shown in Table 5, following the suggestions of Hair et al. (2019), this study reported the path coefficients, the standard errors, *t*-values, and *p*-values for the structural model using a 5,000-sample re-sample bootstrapping procedure (Ramayah et al., 2018). According to Hahn and Ang (2017), *p*-values are not a good criterion for assessing the significance of a hypothesis. Instead, a combination of criteria, such as *p*-values, confidence intervals, and effect sizes, should be used. Table 5 summarises the criteria to assess the proposed hypotheses.

The direct effect of the source credibility dimension on consumers' attitude towards advertisements, R^2 , was 0.563 ($Q^2 = 0.535$), which suggests all four predictors explained 56.3% of the variance in consumer attitude towards advertisements. Additionally, the

direct effect of attitude towards advertisement on consumers' purchase intention, R^2 was 0.452 ($Q^2 = 0.463$), trustworthiness (H1: $\beta = 0.360, p = 0.000$), and attractiveness (H3: $\beta = 0.361, p = 0.000$) are positively linked to attitude towards advertisement. Meanwhile, expertise (H2: $\beta = 0.088, p = 0.314$) and similarity (H4: $\beta = 0.119, p = 0.138$) exhibit insignificant relationships with consumers' purchase intention. In addition, the analysis revealed a positive relationship between attitude towards advertisement and purchase intention (H9: $\beta = 0.672, p = 0.000$); thus, H1, H3, and H9 are supported.

Mediation

This study employs the suggestions from Aguinis et al. (2017) to test the full mediation effect while excluding the direct effect between independent and dependent variables. Table 6 provides an assessment of the mediating effect of attitude towards advertisement (AAD) in relationships between different dimensions of source credibility (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity) and purchase intention (PI). The analysis follows the criteria where *t*-values exceeding

Table 5
Hypotheses testing for direct relationships

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Dev	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	f ²	Supported
H1	TR -> AAD	0.360	0.097	3.716	0.000	0.612	0.373	0.119	Yes
H2	EX -> AAD	0.088	0.087	1.007	0.314	-0.071	0.268	0.008	No
H3	ATT -> AAD	0.361	0.068	5.329	0.000	0.221	0.489	0.226	Yes
H4	SM -> AAD	0.119	0.080	1.482	0.138	-0.036	0.274	0.017	No
H9	AAD -> PI	0.672	0.047	14.409	0.000	0.582	0.764	0.823	Yes

Source: Authors' work

1.96 and *p*-values below 0.05 indicate significant mediation. It is observed that attitude towards advertisement significantly mediates the relationship between trustworthiness (H5: *t* = 3.598, *p* = 0.000) and attractiveness (H7: *t* = 5.134, *p* = 0.000). Conversely, attitude towards advertisement does not mediate

the relationship between expertise (H6: *t* = 0.985, *p* = 0.325) and similarity (H8: *t* = 1.447, *p* = 0.148) towards purchase intention. This result underscores the varying roles of AAD in influencing how trustworthiness and attractiveness impact consumer purchase intentions within the studied framework.

Table 6
Assessment of significant mediating effect

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Dev	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	Supported
H5	TR -> AAD -> PI	0.067	3.598	0.000	0.108	0.373	Yes
H6	EX -> AAD -> PI	0.060	0.985	0.325	-0.048	0.189	No
H7	ATT -> AAD -> PI	0.047	5.134	0.000	0.150	0.325	Yes
H8	SM -> AAD-> PI	0.055	1.447	0.148	-0.024	0.191	No

Note. *t*-values > 1.96 and *p*-values < 0.05

Source: Authors' work

DISCUSSION

The data analyses conducted revealed that H1 in this study is supported. This finding is consistent with prior studies that have demonstrated the crucial role of trustworthiness in advertising effectiveness under the context of SMIs (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Chekima et al., 2020; Janssen et al., 2022). Essentially, this suggests that the trustworthiness of TikTok influencers significantly impacts consumers' attitudes

towards the content, recommendations, or information related to local cosmetic products that the influencers share on TikTok. It indicates that consumers tend to favour brands endorsed by trustworthy influencers, contributing to positive attitudes and increased intention to purchase (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Trustworthiness is a crucial attribute that enhances credibility, and it aligns with the Source Credibility

Theory, which states that a message is more likely to be accepted when it comes from a source perceived as credible (Umeongu, 2012). Therefore, it is reasonable to consider trustworthiness as a key factor influencing consumer attitudes.

On the other hand, the data analyses show that H2 is not supported. The findings from this study indicate that expertise is not a characteristic highly sought-after by consumers, and this finding shows similarity with several other studies (e.g., Ladhari et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Mat et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the insignificance of expertise can be attributed to the respondents' ages and gender. Since the majority of the respondents were young female students who were already knowledgeable about cosmetic products, the expertise of TikTok influencers in cosmetics may be irrelevant to them. Furthermore, the findings from this study support Munnukka et al.'s (2016) suggestion that the impact of endorsers' expertise can vary based on the complexity of the product. Consumers may rely less on the influencers' expertise for simpler products like cosmetics, especially if they are already familiar with them. In this study, since most respondents are young females knowledgeable about cosmetics, the expertise of TikTok influencers does not significantly affect their attitude toward advertisement.

H3, which is meant to assess whether the attractiveness of TikTok influencers affects consumers' attitudes towards advertisements, is supported. It suggests that when an attractive TikTok influencer posts

promotional content on TikTok, it is more likely to garner favourable attitudes from the consumers. Psychical attractiveness is often linked with positive traits like success, health, social status, likability, and trustworthiness. These traits are known to enhance influencers' credibility and persuasiveness (Chekima et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Munnukka et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2020). Furthermore, the context of this study may also have influenced the findings. Many scholars have postulated that the physical attractiveness of the endorser positively affects advertising credibility, especially when the endorsed product is perceived to enhance physical appearance (Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Munnukka et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2020). Since the topic under investigation involves cosmetic products, it is unsurprising that people would respond favourably towards advertisements or promotional content from attractive influencers.

Next, based on the data analyses, H4, which evaluates whether the similarity of TikTok influencers and consumers can impact consumers' attitudes toward advertisements, is not significant. This might indicate that the respondents do not necessarily feel a strong sense of identification or similarity with TikTok influencers. One possible underlying assumption could be related to their demographic characteristics. The respondents might not perceive themselves as sharing the same demographic characteristics as the influencers, such as gender, age, ethnicity, and income level. For instance, regarding differences in income

level, a Malaysian influencer could typically earn MYR 10k to MYR 100k per month, depending on factors such as follower count, content type, and platform monetisation (“How much does a Malaysian influencer earn?”, 2023). The demographic analysis reported that none of the respondents had an income level exceeding MYR 4k per month. Additionally, the majority of respondents were either students or unemployed (66.7%), indicating their lack of stable incomes. The significant gap in income levels may contribute to the feeling of dissimilarity towards TikTok influencers.

Ethnic differences might also explain the insignificant impact of perceived similarity, as observed in this study with respondents representing diverse ethnic backgrounds. Levin (1996) highlighted that racial groups display variations in facial features, such as hair colour, face size, and skin texture, contributing to their distinct appearances. These inherent distinctions across ethnicities could result in using distinct cosmetic products or application techniques.

It is widely recognised that consumer attitudes are pivotal predictors of purchase intentions, a concept deeply rooted in foundational theories, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). These theories consistently assert that attitudes significantly influence behavioural intentions, positing that positive attitudes lead to stronger intentions to engage in specific behaviours (Ing & Ming, 2018). Consistent with prior findings (e.g., Ariffin

et al., 2022; Mathur et al., 2021; Najjar & Rather, 2021), this study reveals that consumers' attitude towards advertisements significantly affects consumers' intention to purchase local cosmetic products. Therefore, H9 is supported. This study refers to ‘advertisement’ as promotional content featuring local cosmetic products, specifically by influencers on TikTok. In essence, when consumers show a favourable attitude towards promotional content conveyed by TikTok influencers, there is also a high possibility that their intention to purchase the product featured in the TikTok video is elevated.

Finally, the bootstrapping analysis in this study reveals that the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention (H5) and the relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention (H7) is fully mediated by attitude towards advertisement. The analysis outcomes indicate that when the influencers are perceived as trustworthy and attractive, it will generate positive behaviour of consumers towards promotional content of local cosmetic products featured in the particular influencers' TikTok videos, which consequently enhances consumers' intention to purchase the cosmetic products. It suggests that consumers' attitudes, influenced by credibility traits, do indeed play a role in determining their intent to purchase (Lim et al., 2017; Nafees et al., 2021). On the other hand, there is no mediating effect of attitude towards advertisement found in the relationship between expertise and purchase intention (H6), as well as the relationship

between similarity and purchase intention (H8).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the importance of the credibility traits of SMIs in shaping consumers' purchase intentions, specifically within the context of the Malaysian local cosmetic industry. The findings from this study indicate that the trustworthiness and physical attractiveness of SMIs are significant drivers of consumers' positive attitudes towards advertisements, which in turn can influence their intention to purchase local cosmetic products. These results align with previous research on source credibility and advertising effectiveness, thus reinforcing the idea that consumers are more likely to be influenced by credible and attractive influencers. In contrast, expertise and similarity were not found to significantly impact purchase intention, possibly due to demographic factors such as age, gender, and existing product knowledge among the respondents of this study.

Theoretical, Managerial, Methodological, and Social Implications

The results of this study contribute to the advancement of existing literature by enriching the theoretical perspectives in the following ways: First, while Source Credibility Theory has been extensively studied in traditional advertising and celebrity endorsements, this research explores its relevance and dynamics in a relatively new and rapidly growing context, namely TikTok influencers.

Secondly, by examining the mediating role of consumers' attitudes towards advertisements between the relationship of TikTok influencers' credibility and consumers' purchase intention, this study highlights the significance of consumers' perceptions of credibility, not only towards their intention to purchase but also their attitude towards advertisements, which further influence their decisions. Thirdly, this study empirically validates the proposed hypotheses, strengthening the theoretical foundations of Source Credibility Theory in the digital age. In addition, the findings from this study substantiated the fact that each dimensions have independent effects on source credibility (Munnukka et al., 2016), further confirming that the source credibility dimensions are highly recommended to be tested individually instead of as a single dimension. Next, this study also has narrowed empirical gaps in terms of the effects of source credibility, which has yet to be conclusive (Halder et al., 2021) and attributes of SMIs that enhanced the effectiveness of promotional messages, which is deemed relatively scarce (Duh & Thabethe, 2021).

Additionally, this study offers valuable implications for practitioners in the local cosmetic industry, which includes shareholders, marketing managers, and social media influencers. This research reveals that the credibility attributes of TikTok influencers, namely trustworthiness and attractiveness, are the key determinants of favourable attitudes towards advertisement and, ultimately, consumers' intention to

purchase local cosmetic products. Therefore, it is strongly advised that when selecting influencers on TikTok to represent cosmetic products, marketers should ensure that the influencers have personally used and tested the products before sharing them with their followers. This can be done by sending product samples to influencers so they can provide first-hand information regarding the product as honestly and truthfully as possible, thereby building trust with their audience and positively influencing consumers' purchase intention. In addition, it is also recommended that the influencer representing or endorsing the cosmetic product is someone who maintains a presentable and attractive image both online and offline. Marketers or SMIs should also pay attention to the content shared online because this study implies that attitude towards advertisements affects consumers' intention to purchase local cosmetic products. The credibility and reliability of the promotional content shared regarding local cosmetic products should be preserved.

From the viewpoint of methodological contribution, this study added to the imminent decisions by demonstrating the applicability of the statistical tool SmartPLS 4.0 to analyse the data, especially studies that include mediating effects. Secondly, the current study adopts the recommendations by Aguinis et al. (2017), who encouraged a complete mediation test. It further assisted in refining the understanding of the relationships between variables and enhanced the validity and applicability of

the results. Thirdly, the measurement items in this study were adopted and adapted from previously established studies and had undergone reliability and validity checking, implying the applicability of the measurement items. Additionally, the measurement items were made to fit in the context of SMIs, specifically TikTok influencers. Hence, the instrument may be feasible for future studies in the context of TikTok influencers.

Lastly, in terms of social implications, this study provided additional insights into how consumers' purchase intentions of local cosmetic products are affected by TikTok influencers through their credibility traits. This study contributes to helping local cosmetic industry players, as well as TikTok influencers, understand consumers' purchase intentions. More knowledge and understanding of the intention to purchase can help local cosmetic industry players and influencers make business decisions and develop marketing strategies to encourage people to purchase local cosmetic products. For example, this study found that the trustworthiness and attractiveness of TikTok influencers positively affect consumers' purchase intention through positive attitudes towards advertisement. Hence, the efforts should stem from enhancing or ensuring that the SMI are trustworthy and attractive before having them endorse the local cosmetic products. Correspondingly, this can amass a positive attitude towards the promotional content shared on TikTok and eventually increase consumers' purchase intention.

Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

Although this study has contributed substantially to the body of knowledge, the cosmetic industry and society, it is not without limitations. This study primarily focuses on a specific age group, namely TikTok users in Malaysia, with a particular emphasis on the sample from Sabah and Sarawak. Future studies should consider including a more diverse sample representing various demographic profiles, such as age, gender, or geographical location. Secondly, there seemed to be persistent homogeneity in the sample in this study, specifically in terms of gender and income level, which is comprised mostly of female students with no monthly income. Future studies should aim for a more heterogeneous sample to account for diverse consumer profiles. Although this study has fulfilled the minimum sample size suggested by *G*Power*, future research can enhance this limitation by collecting more samples. Moreover, this study employs a cross-sectional research design, which captures data only once. Considering the rapid evolution of influencer marketing and swift technological changes, future research may consider adopting longitudinal or experimental research design as it can offer a more in-depth and holistic understanding of the dynamic landscape. Another potential limitation of this study may revolve around not distinguishing the type of TikTok influencers (i.e., micro-influencers, mega-influencers). The number of followers can distinguish these types of influencers, and there is a possibility

that the number of followers can affect credibility perception. Future studies may also investigate the role of different types of influencers and how they affect credibility perception. Finally, the current study only focuses on the credibility effects of TikTok influencers. Since TikTok is known for its engagement rates compared to established platforms (Geysler, 2022), future studies could include online engagement in the study construct. Additionally, the findings from this study imply attractiveness and trustworthiness as significant traits of SMIs, while expertise and similarity do not. This outcome presents somewhat contradictory findings compared to most studies that imply positive effects of expertise and similarity on consumers' attitudes and, ultimately, their purchase intentions. This discrepancy suggests the possibility of other factors influencing consumers' attitudes towards advertisements and purchase intentions. Future studies could delve deeper into these potential factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in influencer marketing. It could involve incorporating moderator variables to strengthen the relationships between different variables.

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