

# Influencer marketing on TikTok: How content credibility, perceived similarity, and authenticity impact consumer attitudes.

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## ABSTRACT

Social media influencers gain a sizable following of captivated followers who are extremely valuable to marketers by continuously creating quality content on social media (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Influencers and brands work together to promote a brand's goods or services through influencer marketing, which is a strategy that brands utilise because it benefits influencers, consumers, and both parties (Mckinsey & Company, 2023). Influencer marketing has become a popular research topic in recent years, particularly in relation to consumer behaviour. The efficacy of the content is contingent upon various factors linked to the attributes of both the source and the content (Martínez-López et al., 2020). Although influencer marketing has been extensively examined in the literature which aims to reveal the influence of source and message credibility on product attitude, the impacts of perceived similarity, source admiration and psychological closeness with the influencer were neglected (Ye et al., 2021). Furthermore, the authenticity of social media influencers and number of followers could be further explored as possible underlying mechanism of the relationship between content characteristics and product attitude (Ye et al., 2021). This study aims to address three research questions:

RQ1: What are the impacts of content characteristics (central cues) and perceived similarity (peripheral cues) on consumer product attitudes?

RQ2: What is the impact of social media influencer type (macro- vs. micro-influencer) on consumer content perceptions and product attitudes??

RQ3: Does authenticity of influencer mediate the interrelationships between content characteristics and perceived similarity and product attitudes?

In addressing these three research questions, this study contributes to the academic literature in three ways. First, it investigates how content characteristics and perceived similarity with the influencer affect consumer's product attitudes. Second, it reveals the role of influencer authenticity on the interrelationships between content characteristics, perceived similarity and product attitudes. Third, it examines the moderating role of the number of followers on these relationships with an experimental design.

The study employs a within-subject experimental design. A "within-subject" designed experiment involves exposing each participant to more than one of the treatments under test. Examples of such treatments include playing a game with two different parameter values, receiving treatment, and receiving no treatment, responding to questions more than once, or completing tasks while being stimulated by multiple external stimuli (Charness et al., 2012). The study utilizes an online questionnaire that contains measurement items for both micro and macro skincare brand influencers. Stimuli were TikTok videos and screenshots of influencer account pages that shows the number of followers. Explanatory factor analysis,

reliability analysis and repeated-measure ANOVA and multiple regression analyses will be performed on data in SPSS software. Study results will provide significant insights for practitioners in terms of considering the content characteristics and perceived similarity of their endorsers and selecting the type of social media influencers they are using to promote their products.

**Keywords:** Content characteristics, source similarity, product attitude, authenticity, TikTok influencers

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