

## The Influence of TikTok Hidden-Gem Culinary Reviews on Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention

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### ABSTRAKSI

Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana pengaruh daya tarik emosional, daya tarik influencer, kepercayaan influencer, dan keahlian influencer TikTok terhadap sikap konsumen pada merek dan minat beli pengguna TikTok di Indonesia, dengan kerangka konseptual dari *Source Credibility Theory*. Fokus penelitian ini pada konten ulasan kuliner *hidden gem*. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring dengan skala Likert lima poin dari 239 responden, dan dianalisis menggunakan *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) melalui SmartPLS. Model pengukuran mengonfirmasi reliabilitas dan validitas yang memuaskan pada seluruh konstruk. Seluruh lima hipotesis didukung secara empiris. Sikap pada merek terbukti menjadi prediktor terkuat terhadap minat beli ( $\beta = 0,696$ ), sekaligus berfungsi sebagai mediator sentral antara kredibilitas influencer dan niat perilaku konsumen. Daya tarik emosional menunjukkan pengaruh terbesar terhadap sikap pada merek ( $\beta = 0,335$ ), diikuti kepercayaan ( $\beta = 0,302$ ), daya tarik ( $\beta = 0,237$ ), dan keahlian influencer ( $\beta = 0,203$ ). Temuan ini memperluas penerapan *Source Credibility Theory* pada konteks yang belum banyak diteliti sekaligus memberikan panduan praktis bagi pelaku usaha kuliner dalam merancang kolaborasi *influencer marketing* yang lebih efektif.

**Kata Kunci:** Source Credibility Theory; TikTok Influencer Marketing; Minat Beli

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the influence of emotional appeal, influencer attractiveness, influencer trustworthiness, and influencer expertise on consumers' attitudes toward brands and purchase intentions among TikTok users in Indonesia, grounded in the Source Credibility Theory framework. The research focuses on "hidden gem" culinary review content. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale from 239 respondents and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The measurement model confirms satisfactory reliability and validity across all constructs. All five hypotheses are empirically supported. Attitude toward the brand is found to be the strongest predictor of purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.696$ ) and serves as a central mediator between influencer credibility and consumers' behavioral intentions. Emotional appeal exhibits the strongest effect on brand attitude ( $\beta = 0.335$ ), followed by trustworthiness ( $\beta = 0.302$ ), attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.237$ ), and influencer expertise ( $\beta = 0.203$ ). These findings extend the application of Source Credibility Theory to a relatively underexplored context and provide practical guidance for culinary businesses in designing more effective influencer marketing collaborations.*

**Keywords:** Source Credibility Theory; TikTok Influencer Marketing; Purchase Intention.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing via prominent figures whose opinions have clout over a certain group is known as "influencer marketing," and it is a boon for brands (Belanche et al., 2021). Because of the immediate feedback and interaction that consumers have on social media, an increasing number of brands are turning to these channels for advertising (Barta et al., 2023). Additionally, businesses have seen success by expanding their audience reach via social media customers (E.C. Buechel & J. Berger, 2018). On this platform, users may simply find a number of

product and service recommendations (Yung-Shen, 2014).

This global shift toward social media marketing is particularly pronounced in emerging markets such as Indonesia, where digital adoption has grown rapidly in recent years (Ngangom, 2020). Indonesia now ranks among the largest TikTok markets globally. As of January 2025, 143 million Indonesians were active on social media, with Facebook leading at 122 million users, followed closely by TikTok at 108 million users (DataReportal, 2025) underscoring the platform's significant and growing influence in the country.

TikTok's rapid growth has established the platform as a powerful channel for product discovery, especially in the food and beverage sector, where content featuring culinary experiences, reviews, and hidden gems tends to generate strong user engagement (*Digital 2025*, 2025). Hidden gem is defined as a less widely known culinary venue that possesses unique value and attractiveness despite receiving limited public exposure (Cambridge, 2026).

As social media has grown, influencers have also become more important because they attract followers through content that feels appealing and relatable with the viewers (Li & Peng, 2021). Barta et al. (Barta et al., 2023) states that since social media influencers often have a more in-depth and intimate relationship with their followers, this contrasts with the perceived distance typically associated with traditional celebrity endorsements.

Prior research predominantly examines the direct effects of influencer credibility on purchase intention. In the Indonesia, several studies already confirmed the significant influence of TikTok influencers and social media content on consumer behavior. For example, influencer attributes such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise have been found to significantly affect purchase intention among Indonesian consumers (Sanny et al., 2020).

In addition, prior studies in Indonesia indicate that online reviews significantly influence how consumers decisions, particularly in the food and beverage sector (Hardoko, 2020). These findings are relevant in the context of hidden gem culinary content, where recommendations and kind of reviews are key drivers of discovery and trial behavior. Despite the growing body of research on influencer marketing, several important gaps remain.

Previous studies have primarily examined the effects of influencer credibility dimensions, such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, in general product categories or broad social media contexts. In addition, emotional appeal is often investigated separately from influencer credibility factors. Consequently, limited research has explored how emotional appeal and influencer credibility simultaneously influence consumers' attitudes toward brands within TikTok-based hidden gem culinary review content. This context is particularly important because hidden gem culinary reviews combine entertainment, storytelling, and product discovery in a way that differs from conventional influencer marketing content. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by developing an integrated model that examines the influence of emotional appeal, influencer attractiveness, trustworthiness,

and expertise on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention among Indonesian TikTok users..

The reason why influencer marketing is useful for brands, is because the products can be introduced through figures whose opinions already matter to the target audience (Belanche et al., 2021). Even brands across product and service categories collaborate with social media influencers because they want access to the influencers' followers and hope to shape their brand-related responses (Li & Peng, 2021).

Sprout Social reports that nearly half of consumers make a purchase at least once a month because of influencers, showing that influencer content can directly affect buying behavior (Sprout Social, 2025). Influencers are usually followed by more segmented audiences who share similar interests, values, and preferences, which makes them especially useful for reaching specific target markets.

In this era, customer decisions regarding shopping and dining out are influenced by reviews available on social media also (Nazlan et al., 2018). According to TikTok for Business (TikTok For Business, 2025), the finding that 72% of users indicate they try new brands or goods more regularly since joining TikTok is especially relevant when it comes to discovering new meals and beverages.

The same source also says over half of users tried a snack for the first time after viewing creator or recommendation videos on TikTok, which is especially useful for arguments about food reviews, hidden gems, and recommendation content (TikTok For Business, 2025). Food influencers are social media personalities who engage with their audiences by sharing food-related content, promoting food products, and shaping consumers' eating preferences and behavior (Gil-Quintana et al., 2021).

This research examines how emotional appeal, influencer attractiveness, influencer trustworthiness, and influencer expertise shape attitude toward the brand and ultimately purchase intention. This study focuses on the context of TikTok influencer reviews of hidden gem culinary venues in Indonesia.

Drawing on Source Credibility Theory and recent developments in influencer marketing research (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), this study examines how TikTok influencer reviews of "*hidden gem culinary content*" shape consumer responses in Indonesia. This study contributes to the literature in two ways. First, it extends influencer marketing research to the

relatively underexplored context of “hidden gem” culinary reviews on TikTok, where product discovery, entertainment, and brand evaluation often occur at the same time.

Second, it places attitude toward the brand as a central mechanism linking influencer related cues and emotional appeal to purchase intention, thereby offering a more brand focused explanation of how review based content influences consumer decisions.

In doing so, this study provides both theoretical insight into the growing literature on social media influencer marketing and practical guidance for culinary businesses and marketers in designing more effective TikTok collaborations. The following sections present the theoretical background and hypotheses, followed by the research method, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

**1.1 Hypothesis Development**

Prior advertising research has demonstrated that emotional and informational appeals can generate more favorable brand attitudes and stronger purchase, related responses than purely informational approaches, with emotional engagement and storytelling playing a particularly influential role in shaping brand perceptions on social media platforms (Cao & Nguyen, 2025; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005). By making the review more vivid, real, and memorable, emotionally engaging material may increase viewers' psychological connection with the featured company in the context of TikTok "hidden gem" culinary evaluations.

*H1: Emotional appeal positively affects attitude toward the brand.*

Influencer attractiveness is commonly understood as the degree to which an influencer is perceived as appealing in terms of appearance, personality, charm, and overall presentation (Li & Peng, 2021). In the context of this study, where influencers

review hidden gem culinary content, influencer attractiveness may also make the message more engaging and socially desirable, thereby encouraging viewers to transfer these favorable perceptions to the featured culinary.

*H2: Influencer attractiveness positively affects attitude toward the brand.*

Trustworthiness reflects the extent to which an influencer is perceived as honest, sincere, reliable, and genuine by their content (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024). Customers are likely to have a more favourable impression of the brand as a result of the credibility of the influencer on the platform.

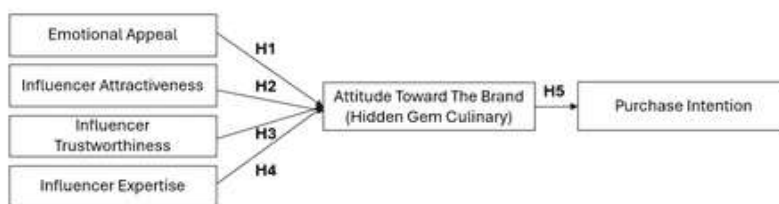
*H3: Influencer trustworthiness positively affects attitude toward the brand.*

Influencer expertise positively affects attitudes toward the endorsed brand and purchase intention, while broader influencer research also suggests that expertise improves important attitudinal outcomes such as image satisfaction and trust in branded content (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024). A "hidden gem" review of a culinary might convey the reviewer's level of knowledge by way of in-depth comments on the restaurant's flavour, menu items, pricing, ambience, and overall value to the consumer.

*H4: Influencer expertise positively affects attitude toward the brand.*

Some studies explicitly examine purchase intention from the perspective of attitude toward the brand, and related findings show that influencer source characteristics stimulate positive consumer attitudes, which in turn increase purchase intention (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024). Once viewers of TikTok "hidden gem" food reviews have a positive impression of the featured company, they are more likely to be inclined to visit the establishment, sample the cuisine, or perhaps buy anything from them.

*H5: Attitude toward the brand positively affects purchase intention.*



**Figure 1. Research Model**

**2. METHOD**

Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire distributed between February and April 2025, using a five-point Likert scale

ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Online surveys were preferred for their efficiency in terms of time and cost, as well as their ability to reach geographically dispersed respondents (Malhotra et al., 2020). Online surveys were preferred for their greater efficiency in both time and cost compared to in-person data collection (Malhotra et al., 2020).

A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that all respondents met the following criteria: (1) Indonesian residents aged 17 years and older, (2) active TikTok users who spend at least one hour each day on the platform, and (3) have watched TikTok content featuring hidden gem culinary reviews in the past three months. A total of 239 valid responses were obtained and included in the final analysis. The sample size was considered sufficient for PLS-SEM analysis, which typically requires a minimum of 10 times the largest number of structural paths directed at a specific construct in the model (J. Hair et al., 2021).

Although purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for ensuring that respondents possessed direct experience with TikTok hidden gem culinary content, this technique presents significant

methodological limitations, that warrant careful consideration. Unlike probability-based sampling methods, purposive sampling does not afford every member of the target population an equal chance of selection, which inherently compromises the statistical representativeness of the sample (Etikan, 2016).

The deliberate restriction of eligibility to active TikTok users who had recently engaged with hidden gem culinary reviews, means that individuals with varying levels of platform engagement, different content preferences, or limited digital literacy are systematically excluded, potentially skewing the attitudinal and behavioral patterns observed in this study (Tongco, 2007).

This study employs a two-stage Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach (J. Hair et al., 2021). Recent studies on behavioural research have made extensive use of PLS-SEM because of its effectiveness with relatively small sample sizes, its suitability for exploratory research designs, and its capability to handle complex mediation structures (J. Hair et al., 2021).

**Table 1. Operational Variable**

Construct	Code	Indicator	Sources
<b>Emotional Appeal</b>	EA1	Konten food vlogger TikTok tentang kuliner hidden gem menarik saya secara emosional	(Wei, 2025)
	EA2	Konten tersebut membuat saya penasaran terhadap kuliner hidden gem yang ditampilkan.	
	EA3	Konten tersebut membangkitkan selera saya terhadap kuliner hidden gem yang direview.	
	EA4	Konten tersebut membuat saya ingin segera mencoba kuliner hidden gem yang ditampilkan.	
<b>Influencer Attractiveness</b>	ATT1	Food vlogger TikTok yang saya tonton terlihat menarik.	(Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020)
	ATT2	Food vlogger tersebut memiliki gaya penyampaian yang menarik.	
	ATT3	Food vlogger tersebut menyenangkan untuk ditonton.	
	ATT4	Penampilan dan pembawaan food vlogger tersebut membuat kontennya lebih menarik.	
<b>Influencer Trustworthiness</b>	TR1	Saya menilai food vlogger TikTok tersebut jujur dalam memberikan ulasan.	(Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020), (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024)
	TR2	Saya percaya food vlogger tersebut memberikan pendapat yang dapat dipercaya.	
	TR3	Ulasan food vlogger tersebut terasa tulus.	
	TR4	Saya menganggap rekomendasi dari food vlogger tersebut dapat dipercaya.	
<b>Influencer Expertise</b>	EX1	Food vlogger TikTok tersebut memiliki pengetahuan yang baik tentang makanan yang direview.	(Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020), (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024)
	EX2	Food vlogger tersebut tampak berpengalaman dalam mereview makanan.	
	EX3	Food vlogger tersebut mampu menjelaskan kuliner hidden gem dengan baik.	
	EX4	Saya menilai food vlogger tersebut kompeten dalam memberikan rekomendasi kuliner.	

<b>Attitude Toward the Brand</b>	ATD1	Saya merasa kuliner hidden gem yang ditampilkan dalam konten tersebut menarik.	(Belanche et al., 2021)
	ATD2	Saya memiliki kesan positif terhadap kuliner hidden gem yang direview.	
	ATD3	Menurut saya, kuliner hidden gem yang ditampilkan layak untuk dicoba.	
	ATD4	Secara keseluruhan, saya menyukai kuliner hidden gem yang ditampilkan.	
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	PI1	Saya berniat mencoba kuliner hidden gem yang ditampilkan oleh food vlogger TikTok tersebut.	(Belanche et al., 2021)
	PI2	Saya mempertimbangkan untuk membeli kuliner hidden gem yang direview dalam konten tersebut.	
	PI3	Kemungkinan besar saya akan membeli atau mencoba kuliner hidden gem tersebut.	
	PI4	Jika saya memiliki kesempatan, saya ingin mengunjungi atau membeli kuliner hidden gem yang ditampilkan.	

Source: Primary data processed (2026).

Reliability and validity assessment followed the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (J. F. Hair et al., 2019), where, where internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha, convergent validity was assessed through Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity was examined to ensure that each construct is empirically distinct from the others (J. F. Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test**

	Cronbach’s Alpha	CR (rho a)	CR (rho c)	AVE
<b>ATD</b>	0.932	0.932	0.951	0.830
<b>ATT</b>	0.922	0.923	0.945	0.811
<b>EA</b>	0.934	0.935	0.953	0.835
<b>EX</b>	0.930	0.931	0.950	0.827
<b>PI</b>	0.928	0.931	0.949	0.822
<b>TR</b>	0.927	0.929	0.948	0.821

Source: Primary data processed (2026).

All Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and AVE values exceeded the recommended thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively, confirming satisfactory reliability and convergent validity of all constructs.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Result

Demographic profile of the respondents. Of the total 239 respondents, 148 (62%) were female and 91 (38%) were male. In terms of age distribution, the sample was predominantly composed of Generation Z respondents, accounting for 172 individuals (72%), while the remaining 67 respondents (28%) belonged to Generation Y.

**Table 3. Respondent Profile**

Characteristics	Category	n	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	91	38%
	Female	148	62%
<b>Age</b>	Generation Y	67	28%

#### Educational attainment

Generation Z	172	72%	
Junior high school	2	1%	
Senior high school	44	18%	
Diploma	16	7%	
Bachelor’s degree	147	62%	
Postgraduate degree	30	13%	
<b>Average time spent using TikTok per day</b>	< 1 hour	8	3%
	1–2 hours	57	24%
	3–4 hours	65	27%
	5–6 hours	63	26%
	6 hours	46	19%

Source: Primary data processed (2026).

#### 3.2 Hypothesis Testing Results

All predicted correlations are confirmed by the data. With a path coefficient of 0.696, brand attitude strongly and favourably affects purchase intention. This research suggests that customers who have a positive impression of the brand are more likely to be inclined to make a purchase. Emotional messaging is useful in improving brand perception, since emotional appeal has a favourable influence on attitude towards the brand ( $\beta = 0.335$ ). Influencers’ attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.237$ ), knowledge ( $\beta = 0.203$ ), and trustworthiness ( $\beta = 0.302$ ) all have a favourable effect on the attitude towards the brand. Emotional appeal is the most influential of these factors, followed by credibility, physical beauty, and knowledge. Among the influencer-related dimensions, trustworthiness demonstrates the strongest influence on attitude toward the brand. This finding indicates that TikTok users place considerable importance on the perceived honesty and authenticity of influencer reviews when evaluating hidden gem culinary recommendations. Unlike traditional advertising, hidden gem content often relies on consumers’ perception that recommendations are based on genuine personal experiences rather than commercial motives.

Consequently, when influencers are perceived as trustworthy, viewers are more likely to transfer their positive evaluations to the featured culinary brand.

In general, the findings show that consumers' attitudes towards brands are the primary drivers of their intention to buy, with elements connected to emotions and influencers playing a significant role in predicting these attitudes.

Consumers' attitudes about the brand are the most influential factor in determining their propensity to buy, according to the results. Based on the results, viewers are much more likely to plan to buy a hidden gem culinary business after developing a good attitude towards it after seeing TikTok influencer reviews (path coefficient = 0.696).

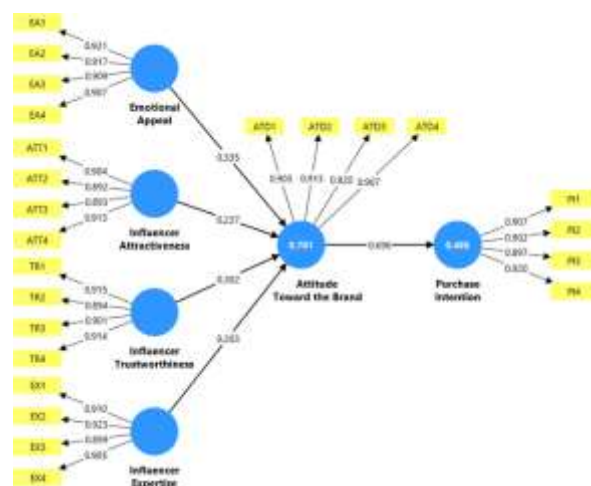
Among the influencer related predictors of brand attitude, trustworthiness demonstrates the strongest influence ( $\beta = 0.302$ ), followed by attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.237$ ) and expertise ( $\beta = 0.203$ ). This suggests that audiences form more favorable brand attitudes when TikTok influencers are perceived as honest, appealing, and knowledgeable. In addition, emotional appeal emerges as the most influential overall predictor of brand attitude ( $\beta = 0.335$ ), indicating that content which feels vivid, relatable, or emotionally engaging strengthens viewers' perceptions of the featured culinary brand.

In sum, the findings point to the importance of the influencer's personal credibility in addition to the content emotional quality in fostering good brand attitudes, which in turn strengthen purchase intention towards hidden gem culinary.

Brand. This value can be classified as substantial, indicating strong explanatory power.

Furthermore, the  $R^2$  value for Purchase Intention is 0.485, indicating that Attitude Toward the Brand explains 48.5% of the variance in Purchase Intention. This value falls within the moderate range, suggesting that while attitude toward the brand is an important determinant of purchase intention, other variables not included in the model may also influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

Overall, the results confirm that purchase intention is largely driven by attitude toward the brand, while emotional and influencer-related factors serve as important predictors of brand attitude.



**Figure 2. PLS-SEM Path Coefficient Result**

**Table 4. Direct Effect**

	$\beta$	P-Value	Result
Attitude Toward the Brand → Purchase Intention	0,696	0.000	Accepted
Emotional Appeal → Attitude Toward the Brand	0,335	0.000	Accepted
Influencer Attractiveness → Attitude Toward the Brand	0,237	0.001	Accepted
Influencer Expertise → Attitude Toward the Brand	0,203	0.000	Accepted
Influencer Trustworthiness → Attitude Toward the Brand	0,302	0.000	Accepted

Source: Primary data processed (2026).

**3.3 Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )**

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was assessed to evaluate the explanatory power of the proposed structural model. The results indicate that the  $R^2$  value for Attitude Toward the Brand is 0.781, suggesting that Emotional Appeal, Influencer Attractiveness, Influencer Trustworthiness, and Influencer Expertise collectively explain 78.1% of the variance in Attitude Toward the

The findings reveal that attitude toward the brand plays the most important role in shaping consumers' purchase intention. With a path coefficient of 0.696, the result suggests that when viewers develop a positive attitude toward a hidden gem culinary venue after watching TikTok influencer reviews, they are much more likely to intend to purchase it. A recent study suggests that social media marketing and brand ambassador significantly influence affects purchasing decisions among Indonesian consumers (Ita & Nurlida, 2023).

In addition, emotional appeal has a positive effect on attitude toward the brand ( $\beta = 0.335$ ), indicating that content that feels exciting, relatable, or emotionally engaging can strengthen viewers' perceptions of the featured culinary venue.

Among the influencer-related factors, trustworthiness shows the strongest influence on brand attitude ( $\beta = 0.302$ ), followed by attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.237$ ) and expertise ( $\beta = 0.203$ ). This means that audiences are more likely to form favorable attitudes when TikTok influencers are seen as honest, appealing, and knowledgeable in their reviews.

Overall, the results suggest that both the emotional quality of the content and the influencer's personal credibility are important in building positive brand attitudes, which then

lead to stronger purchase intention toward hidden gem street food products.

**Table 5. Discriminant Validity HTMT Matrix**

	ATD	ATT	EA	EX	PI	TR
ATD						
ATT	0.775					
EA	0.828	0.667				
EX	0.692	0.557	0.577			
PI	0.747	0.652	0.664	0.599		
TR	0.784	0.606	0.646	0.493	0.569	

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

From Table 5 found out that The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio criterion is used to measure discriminant validity, and all HTMT values fall below the threshold of 0.90 (or 0.85 for a more conservative assessment).

The findings show that every HTMT value in the matrix, from 0.493 (between Influencer Expertise and Influencer Trustworthiness) to 0.828 (between Emotional Appeal and Attitude Toward the Brand), is significantly below the 0.90 threshold. Even the most closely related notions are empirically distinct, as evidenced by the highest value found (EA–ATD = 0.828), which is still below the cutoff.

These results demonstrate that the measurement model is suitable for structural equation analysis because all of its constructs meet the discriminant validity condition. These values confirm that each construct is more strongly related to its own indicators than to other constructs in the model, thereby establishing adequate discriminant validity. Consequently, the measurement model is deemed reliable and valid for proceeding with structural equation model analysis.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effects of emotional appeal, influencer attractiveness, influencer trustworthiness, and influencer expertise on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention among Indonesian TikTok users exposed to hidden gem culinary review content. The findings confirm that all proposed relationships are positive and significant. Attitude toward the brand emerged as the strongest predictor of purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.696$ ), while emotional appeal was identified as the strongest determinant of attitude toward the brand ( $\beta = 0.335$ ), followed by trustworthiness ( $\beta = 0.302$ ), attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.237$ ), and expertise ( $\beta = 0.203$ ).

The structural model demonstrated substantial explanatory power for Attitude Toward the Brand ( $R^2 = 0.781$ ) and moderate explanatory power for Purchase Intention ( $R^2 = 0.485$ ). These findings suggest that both emotional storytelling and influencer credibility play critical roles in shaping favorable consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions within TikTok's hidden gem culinary ecosystem.

This research also indicates that culinary businesses can enhance consumers' purchase intention by fostering positive brand attitudes through well-designed influencer collaborations. Emotionally engaging review content helps create stronger psychological bonds between consumers and the promoted brands. This shows that content quality and influencer credibility are both crucial in forming strong and memorable brand impressions, making them key factors for marketers when developing TikTok campaigns aimed at food exploration audiences.

#### 4.1 Theoretical Contributions

To the body of knowledge on influencer marketing, this research adds two substantial pieces. Firstly, it applies Source Credibility Theory to the unique and understudied realm of TikTok's short-form video content that showcases hidden gem culinary venues. It shows that the theory's fundamental dimensions are still relevant and can predict consumer attitudes in this new type of content. Second, the research posits that one's attitude towards the brand acts as a mediator between the emotional content qualities and the credibility dimensions of influencers and the desire to buy.

Overcoming the direct-effect theories that have dominated previous TikTok marketing research, this method provides a more thorough and brand-centered explanation of how influencer review material influences customer decision-making.

#### 4.2 Practical Implications

Important implications for culinary enterprises, marketers, and content providers in Indonesia's competitive food and beverage scene are carried out by the results of this research.

First, rather than concentrating only on the number of followers or the attractiveness of an influencer's visuals, brand managers and restaurant owners who want to use TikTok as a discovery channel should prioritise working with influencers who are seen as very trustworthy and personable. Consumers are more likely to respond positively to material that is genuine, such as honest reviews, unsponsored-feeling storylines, and straightforward perspectives, as trustworthiness is the biggest influencer-related predictor of brand attitude. In addition, as emotional appeal is a powerful driver of brand attitude, content strategies should focus on sensory storytelling, which includes describing flavour, setting, and the thrill of finding a lesser-known culinary place in vivid detail.

Strong brand impressions, which may be converted into purchase intention, are more likely to result from campaigns that arouse interest and emotional involvement. Third, rather than partnering with macro-influencers who have larger audiences but less engagement, small and independent culinary businesses with limited marketing budgets may find it more cost-effective to work with micro-influencers who are experts in food content and have a strong reputation within their niche communities.

### 4.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although there are several caveats to this study, they do suggest good places to go for more investigation. First, it is difficult to establish causal linkages or see how attitudes and purchase intentions develop across repeated exposures to influencer material since the cross-sectional survey methodology collected consumer impressions at a particular moment in time.

Second, the sample was predominantly composed of Generation Z respondents (72%), with a smaller proportion of Millennials, which limits the representativeness of the findings across broader age demographics. Future studies should employ more balanced sampling strategies or formally compare generational cohorts to assess whether influencer credibility dimensions operate differently across age groups.

Third, and critically, this study was deliberately bounded to the hidden gem culinary niche on TikTok in the Indonesian context. This focus, while theoretically motivated, restricts the generalizability of the findings to other content categories, product types, or digital platforms. Replication across how other social media platforms such as Instagram or YouTube, diverse product sectors, and other Southeast Asian markets is strongly encouraged to evaluate the cross contextual robustness of the proposed model.

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