



The Impact of Tiktok Beauty Influencers on Korean Skincare Brand Awareness Among Gen Z Consumers

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Abstract

The rapid growth of TikTok has reshaped influencer marketing strategies within the global beauty industry. This study examines how beauty influencer exposure and credibility affect Korean skincare brand awareness, consumer perceptions, and behavioral intentions among Generation Z consumers. A quantitative approach was adopted, and survey data were collected from 401 Generation Z respondents. Multiple regression analyses and Pearson Correlation were used to test the hypotheses. The results show that influencer content exposure predicts brand awareness ($\beta = .724, p < .001$), explaining 52.5% of the variance. Influencer credibility measured through expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity also positively affects awareness ($\beta = .676, p < .001$). Exposure significantly influences consumer perceptions ($\beta = .523, p < .001$), and consumer perceptions subsequently predict behavioral intention ($\beta = .523, p < .001$), indicating a cognitive-to-behavioral process. These findings highlight the role of influencer marketing as an awareness-building mechanism that indirectly shapes purchase intentions through perception formation. By integrating Mere Exposure Theory, the Source Credibility Model, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model in a TikTok-specific context, this study contributes to social media marketing literature and provides practical implications for Korean skincare brands targeting Generation Z.

Keywords: *TikTok influencer marketing; Korean skincare; Generation Z; brand awareness; influencer credibility*

1. Introduction

For decades, beauty brands relied on traditional advertising channels such as television, magazines, and billboards to influence consumer preferences and build brand recognition. However, the rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly reduced the effectiveness of conventional media (Wijayanti & Murdapa, 2025). Younger generations, particularly Generation Z, increasingly prefer digital and interactive content, prompting brands to adopt social media platforms as primary marketing channels (Tirocchi, 2024). Among these platforms, TikTok has emerged as a highly influential space shaping beauty trends and consumer awareness. Its short-form video format and algorithm-driven content distribution enable rapid dissemination of beauty-related content, allowing products to gain widespread visibility within a short time. Unlike traditional one-way advertising, TikTok encourages relatability, creativity, and user engagement, making influencer-generated content particularly persuasive (Ki et al., 2020). Within this environment, beauty influencers have become key opinion leaders who shape how consumers discover and evaluate skincare products. TikTok influencers frequently establish a sense of authenticity and relatability by sharing personal routines, product experiences, and reviews. This perceived authenticity enhances the visibility of the brand among younger consumers by transforming product recommendations into viral trends and fostering emotional connections with audience (Ki et al., 2020).

Generation Z plays a central role in this transformation. As digital natives, Gen Z consumers prefer fast-paced, visually engaging, and transparent content. They value authenticity and peer opinions more than traditional advertising, making them highly responsive to influencer marketing (Tirocchi, 2024). Their strong presence on TikTok positions them as a crucial target market for skincare brands. At the same time, Korean skincare (K-beauty) has gained global popularity, particularly among Gen Z consumers, due to its innovative formulations, aesthetic packaging, and results-oriented routines. TikTok has accelerated the international visibility of Korean skincare brands through influencer-led tutorials and viral trends, enabling products to reach diverse global audiences (Q. Liu, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). This convergence of TikTok culture and K-beauty growth provides an important context for examining digital marketing effectiveness. Despite the growing importance of TikTok beauty influencers, limited empirical research specifically examines their impact on Korean skincare brand awareness among Gen Z consumers (Nguyen et al., 2024). In particular, the combined roles of exposure frequency and influencer credibility in shaping awareness, perceptions, and behavioral intentions remain underexplored.

To address the identified research gap, this study investigates the impact of TikTok beauty influencer exposure and influencer credibility on Korean skincare brand awareness, consumer perceptions, and behavioral intention among Generation Z consumers. Using a quantitative research design, this study provides empirical evidence on how TikTok influencer marketing operates across cognitive and behavioral stages of the consumer decision-making process and offers practical implications for skincare brands targeting digitally engaged consumers.

Literature Review

The growth of digital marketing has introduced new approaches, particularly social media campaigns and influencer marketing. Early beauty influencers on platforms such as YouTube built strong relationships with audiences through tutorials, reviews, and personal storytelling. Unlike traditional celebrity endorsements, influencers are often perceived as more relatable and authentic, enabling what Abidin (2016) describes as “peer-to-peer persuasion.” This influence is further reinforced by social proof, in which consumers are shaped by others’ opinions and behaviors (Cialdini, n.d.). As TikTok beauty influencers increasingly shape Gen Z consumers’ awareness and perceptions, it becomes important to examine existing research to better understand this phenomenon. While prior studies on influencer marketing and digital consumer behavior provide valuable insights, research specifically focusing on TikTok, Korean skincare, and Gen Z remains limited. The following literature review examines relevant studies on influencer marketing, social media platforms, and the global rise of Korean skincare, while identifying key gaps that inform the present study.

TikTok as a Distinctive Platform

TikTok is a short-form video social media platform that has rapidly gained global popularity, particularly among Generation Z users. Initially launched as an entertainment application, it allows users to create, share, and discover short videos enhanced by music, filters, and interactive features. A defining characteristic of TikTok is its personalized recommendation system, which enables content to reach wide audiences regardless of follower count, making it a powerful platform for trend formation and digital influence.

TikTok’s algorithm constructs the “For You” page by analyzing user interactions (e.g., likes, shares, comments), content characteristics (e.g., hashtags and captions), and account data to deliver highly tailored content (Q. Liu, 2023). By continuously predicting user preferences and prioritizing engaging content, the platform increases repeated exposure and visibility of specific themes, including beauty-related content. This algorithm-driven personalization allows beauty influencers and skincare brands to reach highly targeted audiences and increases the likelihood that users will encounter similar products multiple times. This continuous exposure plays a crucial role in amplifying influencer marketing effects and strengthening brand awareness among Generation Z consumers.

Beauty content thrives on TikTok due to the platform’s visual immediacy and entertainment-driven culture. Skincare transformations, product demonstrations, and routine breakdowns fit naturally within short-form videos. Viral trends such as “Get Ready with Me” (#GRWM) and “TikTok Made Me Buy It” illustrate how entertainment and commerce intersect, allowing influencer-led content to amplify brand awareness organically rather than solely through planned campaigns (Mansueto, n.d.). Furthermore, TikTok facilitates rapid cultural diffusion, enabling trends originating in one region, such as Korea, to spread quickly across global audiences. This has been particularly significant for Korean skincare (K-beauty), as influencer-led demonstrations and tutorials introduce products and routines to diverse Generation Z consumers. The platform’s participatory culture encourages users to replicate trends, generating additional user-created content that further strengthens brand visibility and engagement.

Influencer Marketing and Consumer Trust

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is closely related to the perceived credibility of the influencer delivering the message. The Source Credibility Model identifies trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as key factors that influence persuasion. Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the influencer is perceived as honest and reliable, while expertise reflects the influencer’s knowledge or competence in a particular subject area (Hovland, 1953). When influencers are perceived as knowledgeable, honest, and relatable, their recommendations are more likely to be viewed as credible by audiences. In social media contexts, such credibility can shape positive

attitudes toward promoted brands and increase consumers' willingness to try or purchase the recommended products.

Parasocial relationships also strengthen the influence of social media personalities. Parasocial interaction describe as a one-sided emotional bond between audiences and media figures (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). On social media platforms, influencers often share personal experiences and authentic content, creating a sense of familiarity and trust among followers. This perceived closeness can enhance the persuasiveness of influencer recommendations. Such dynamics are particularly relevant for Generation Z consumers, who value authenticity and may quickly lose trust when content appears overly commercialized (Tirocchi, 2024a).

Micro-influencers often achieve higher engagement and are perceived as more authentic than traditional celebrities because of their closer relationships with followers. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, consumers may rely on peripheral cues such as relatability and sincerity when evaluating persuasive messages (Ahmad & Karim, 2026). In social media environments, these cues can strongly influence attitudes and behaviors. For Generation Z users, who frequently consume fast-paced digital content, such cues play an important role in shaping responses to influencer recommendations.

Gen Z as Digital Natives

Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, is widely recognized as the first generation of true digital natives. Growing up with smartphones and social media has shaped their media habits and expectations toward brands. Compared to Millennials, Gen Z has spent most of their lives within digital ecosystems and tends to prefer visually engaging, short-form content on interactive platforms. In the beauty and skincare industry, they frequently rely on influencer tutorials, product reviews, and transformation videos, particularly on TikTok. Research indicates that Gen Z values authenticity, relatability, and peer recommendations more than traditional advertising (Tirocchi, 2024). Social proof, such as likes, shares, and comments, also plays an important role in influencing their attitudes and purchase decisions (Ki et al., 2020b). At the same time, Gen Z consumers tend to be skeptical of overly commercialized content. Influencers who demonstrate transparency and align naturally with the brands they promote are more likely to gain trust, while inauthentic endorsements may reduce credibility.

Korean Skincare and TikTok Trend

K-beauty has become globally renowned for its innovative formulations, multi-step routines, and emphasis on achieving "glass skin" a smooth, radiant, and refined-looking complexion. Initially popularized in South Korea, these trends expanded internationally through beauty blogs, YouTube, and Instagram, although their diffusion was often limited by follower-based visibility and longer content formats. TikTok has accelerated this global spread through its algorithm-driven discovery system, enabling trends to go viral quickly and reach geographically diverse audiences by prioritizing engagement over creator popularity (Melendres, n.d.).

On the platform, influencers act as cultural intermediaries who translate K-beauty practices for international audiences. Viral content such as serum layering or sheet mask testing promotes products while normalizing Korean skincare routines in everyday discourse. The short-form video format simplifies complex routines into visually engaging and easily replicable content that aligns with Gen Z's preference for quick and practical information. By sharing personal experiences, influencers reduce perceived barriers to adoption and create aspirational yet attainable brand perceptions, positioning the platform as both a promotional channel and a space where global beauty norms are shaped through peer interaction (Kwon, 2020).

Theory of Mere Exposure

According to the Mere Exposure Theory, first proposed by Zajonc (1968), a stimulus's familiarity increases with repeated exposure, thereby strengthening affective preference toward that stimulus. The theory suggests that familiarity functions largely automatically and subconsciously. Even in the absence of intentional cognitive processing or in-depth information evaluation, individuals may form positive attitudes. Perceptual fluency is the fundamental mechanism underlying mere exposure. A stimulus becomes easier to process cognitively when it is encountered frequently. This ease of processing is often misattributed as liking or preference (Hekkert et al., 2013). In marketing contexts, this explains why consistent brand exposure improves positive evaluation, recall, and recognition.

In digital environments, particularly on algorithm-driven platforms such as TikTok, personalized recommendation systems increase repeated exposure. TikTok's "For You" page continuously delivers content aligned with user preferences, thereby increasing exposure frequency and repetition (Jia & Kim, 2024). This repetition enhances brand salience and mental availability among Generation Z consumers, who spend significant time on short-form video platforms. Repetitive exposure to Korean skincare products through influencer reviews, tutorials, and demonstrations may strengthen memory of brand names, packaging, and product attributes within influencer marketing contexts. Even in the absence of active information search, brand awareness gradually increases as familiarity grows. Thus, exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content is expected to significantly increase Korean skincare brand awareness, and Mere Exposure Theory provides a cognitive explanation for this phenomenon.

Theory of Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial Interaction Theory describes the psychological phenomenon whereby audiences develop one-sided relationships with media personalities (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). These relationships generate feelings of emotional connection, familiarity, and intimacy despite the absence of reciprocal interaction.

In the digital age, interactive features such as personalized responses, live broadcasts, and comment sections intensify parasocial relationships. Influencers often present themselves as relatable individuals rather than distant celebrities, fostering identification and perceived closeness.

Parasocial bonds may significantly increase trust and emotional attachment among Generation Z consumers, who value authenticity and openness in relationships. When followers feel connected to influencers, they are more likely to adopt product recommendations into their own purchasing behaviors. Consequently, parasocial interaction may amplify the persuasive effectiveness of influencer credibility and strengthen the impact of exposure on behavioral intentions and perceptions (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Source Credibility Model

The Source Credibility Model, introduced by Hovland and Weiss (1951), explains that the persuasive impact of a message depends largely on how credible the source is perceived to be. Traditionally, credibility is defined through two key dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise refers to the communicator's perceived knowledge or competence within a particular field. In the context of beauty influencers, expertise may be demonstrated through product comparisons, skincare routines, and explanations of ingredients or product benefits. Trustworthiness, on the other hand, reflects the extent to which audiences perceive the communicator as honest, reliable, and unbiased. Influencers who provide transparent reviews, disclose sponsorships clearly, and maintain consistent messaging are more likely to gain audience trust (Hovland, 1953). In modern digital environments, authenticity has emerged as an additional dimension of credibility, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Authenticity refers to the perception that influencers genuinely use and believe in the products they promote rather than endorsing them solely for commercial gain. As audiences become increasingly skeptical of overly promotional content, authenticity plays an important role in shaping how influencer messages are received and trusted (Ardley et al., 2022).

The mechanism of source credibility operates by increasing message acceptance and reducing counter-arguing. When audiences perceive a source as credible, they are less likely to question the validity of the information and more likely to retain brand-related messages. Empirical research demonstrates that influencer credibility significantly influences brand perceptions, trust, and engagement (Ki et al., 2020b). In the TikTok environment, credible beauty influencers may enhance Korean skincare brand awareness by increasing message memorability and acceptance. Therefore, the Source Credibility Model provides a valuable framework for understanding the impact of expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity on brand awareness (Hovland, 1953).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model explains persuasion through two processing routes: the central route and the peripheral route. The central route involves deliberate and thoughtful evaluation of message arguments and requires substantial cognitive effort and motivation. In contrast, the peripheral route relies on heuristic cues such as attractiveness, popularity, likability, or social proof, requiring less cognitive effort (Cacioppo et al., 1986).

Content consumption on social media platforms, particularly TikTok, is often rapid and entertainment-driven. Consumers may not scrutinize product claims but instead rely on heuristic indicators such as influencer popularity, relatability, visual aesthetics, and engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments).

Influencer endorsements therefore function as peripheral cues that shape attitudes and behavioral intentions. These cues are strengthened through repeated exposure, increasing persuasive effectiveness even without extensive cognitive processing. Influencer demonstrations and product tutorials may also serve as experiential signals that reduce skepticism and enhance perceived product efficacy. This is especially important in skincare contexts, where product effectiveness and risk reduction are primary consumer concerns. Thus, the Elaboration Likelihood Model explains how exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content may influence brand awareness, perceptions, and purchase intentions (Cacioppo et al., 1986).

AIDA Model and the Consumer Decision-Making Process

The AIDA model describes four stages in the consumer decision-making process: Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action. This framework explains how marketing messages guide consumers from initial exposure to eventual purchase behavior (Lee, 2025). In the context of TikTok influencer marketing, exposure to influencer content can first increase brand awareness among audiences. As consumers continue engaging with the content, credible and persuasive messaging may stimulate interest and develop desire toward the promoted products. When positive perceptions are formed, consumers may move toward the action stage, where favorable attitudes translate into purchase intentions and actual purchasing behavior (Nguyen et al., 2024). By integrating the AIDA framework with the previously discussed theories, the present study positions influencer marketing within a structured consumer decision-making process. In this framework, exposure initiates awareness, credibility enhances persuasive acceptance, and various social media cues contribute to shaping consumer behavioral outcomes (Wijayanti & Murdapa, 2025).

Perception Theory

Perception theory explains how individuals interpret and assign meaning to information they encounter. In marketing contexts, consumers do not react to products or brands objectively, but rather based on how they perceive them. These perceptions are shaped by various stimuli such as advertisements, social media content, and peer opinions. On platforms like TikTok, influencer-generated content plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions by presenting products through reviews, tutorials, and personal experiences. As a result, consumers form impressions about product quality, brand image, and credibility based on how information is presented rather than the product itself (Ki et al., 2020). For Generation Z consumers, perception is particularly influenced by authenticity and relatability. They tend to respond more positively to content that feels genuine and aligns with their values. Influencers who share honest experiences and realistic outcomes can shape favorable perceptions, while overly promotional content may lead to skepticism. In fast-paced digital environments, repeated exposure to consistent and relatable messages can gradually strengthen positive perceptions of a brand. Therefore, perception acts as a key cognitive mechanism linking influencer exposure to consumer evaluation and decision-making (Tirocchi, 2024b).

Theory of Planned Behavior (Behavioral Intention)

The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that an individual's behavior is largely determined by their intention to perform that behavior. According to this theory, behavioral intention is influenced by three main factors: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2011). In a consumer context, this means that individuals are more likely to purchase a product if they have a positive attitude toward it, believe that others support the behavior, and feel confident in their ability to make the purchase. In the context of TikTok influencer marketing, these factors are often shaped through social media interactions. Influencer content can influence attitudes by highlighting product benefits and personal experiences, while engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares contribute to subjective norms by signaling social approval. At the same time, demonstrations and tutorials can reduce uncertainty and increase consumers' confidence in using the product. Prior research has shown that exposure to TikTok influencers significantly influences purchase intentions among Generation Z consumers (Nguyen et al., 2024). Therefore, behavioral intention represents the stage where perceptions formed through influencer exposure are translated into potential purchasing actions.



Hypotheses Development

Exposure to TikTok Beauty Influencer Content and Brand Awareness

Exposure to influencer-generated content is a key determinant of consumer cognition in digital marketing environments. Repeated exposure increases familiarity, cognitive accessibility, and brand salience (R. Liu et al., 2026). TikTok's algorithm-driven personalization further intensifies repeated exposure. Previous research demonstrates that social media exposure enhances brand awareness and product discovery (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Despite growing interest in influencer marketing, limited research has examined TikTok-specific exposure effects on Korean skincare brand awareness among Generation Z consumers. Therefore:

H1: Exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content has a significant positive influence on Korean skincare brand awareness among Generation Z consumers.

Influencer Credibility and Brand Awareness

The persuasive effectiveness of influencer marketing is grounded in the Source Credibility Mode (Hovland, 1953). Authenticity further strengthens credibility in digital contexts (Ardley et al., 2022; Khwaja & Farooque, 2025). Parasocial interaction enhances trust and relational attachment (Pimienta, n.d.). Empirical evidence suggests that influencer credibility positively affects brand attitudes and consumer responses (Ki et al., 2020b).

However, limited research has examined how credibility attributes influence Korean skincare brand awareness within TikTok. Accordingly:

H2: Influencer credibility attributes (expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity) have a significant positive influence on Korean skincare brand awareness among Generation Z consumers.

Exposure, Consumer Perceptions, and Behavioral Intentions

Exposure may shape evaluative and behavioral outcomes beyond awareness. The Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests that peripheral cues influence attitudes and behaviors (Cacioppo et al., 1986). Influencer content may function as social proof, reducing uncertainty and increasing purchase intention (Cialdini, n.d.). Prior studies indicate that influencer exposure affects consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Freberg et al., 2011).

Therefore:

H3a: Exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content has a significant positive influence on consumer perceptions of Korean skincare brands among Generation Z consumers.

H3b: Consumer perceptions have a significant positive influence on behavioral intention toward Korean skincare brands among Generation Z consumers.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study. The model illustrates the hypothesized relationships among exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content, influencer credibility, Korean skincare brand awareness, consumer perceptions, and behavioral intention. H1 proposes that exposure positively influences brand awareness. H2 proposes that influencer credibility positively influences brand awareness. H3a proposes that exposure positively influences consumer perceptions, and H3b proposes that consumer perceptions positively influence behavioral intention.

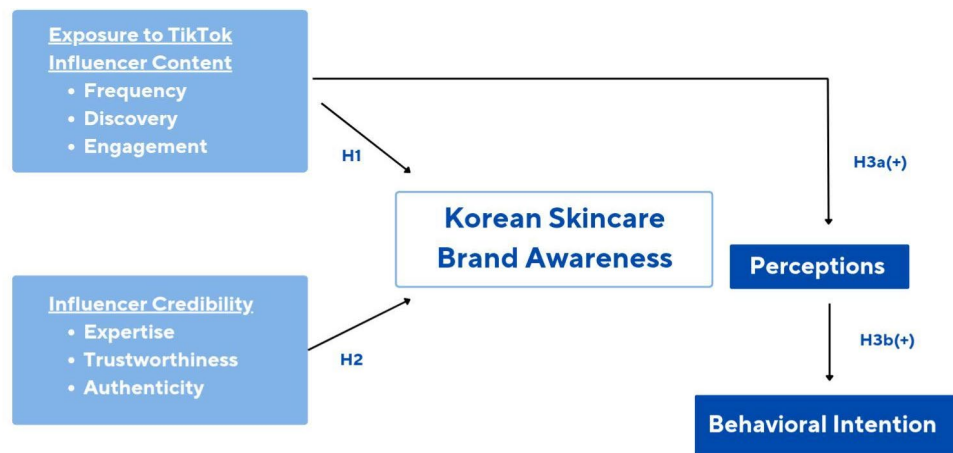


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The impact of TikTok beauty influencers on Generation Z consumers' awareness of Korean skincare brands is investigated in this study using a quantitative descriptive research design. Finding and measuring trends, occurrences, and connections between important variables including exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content, influencer credibility, brand awareness, perceptions, and behavioral intention is the goal of a quantitative approach. The research's descriptive design makes it possible to present a methodical and impartial summary of Gen Z's interactions with TikTok beauty influencers and the relationship between these interactions and K-beauty brand awareness. The survey method was selected as the primary data collection approach because it is efficient in reaching a large number of respondents and is appropriate for collecting standardized data that can be statistically examined.

3.2 Research Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual framework proposes that exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content and influencer credibility function as independent variables, while Korean skincare brand awareness, consumer perceptions, and behavioral intention serve as dependent variables. Specifically, the study hypothesizes that exposure positively influences brand awareness (H1), influencer credibility positively influences brand awareness (H2), exposure positively influences consumer perceptions (H3a), and consumer perceptions positively influence behavioral intention (H3b). These hypotheses are tested using regression-based statistical analysis to determine the strength and significance of the proposed relationships.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The target population of this study consists of Generation Z individuals who actively use TikTok and other social media platforms where beauty-related content is shared. Generation Z represents an appropriate group for this study, as they are highly engaged with digital media and are significantly influenced by social media trends and influencer marketing. A convenience sampling technique was employed, whereby respondents who were available and willing to participate were selected. This method was appropriate due to the accessibility of participants and the efficiency it provides in collecting data from a digitally active population within a limited time frame. A minimum sample size of 400 respondents was targeted to ensure sufficient statistical power for the analysis, and a total of 401 valid responses were obtained and included in the study.

However, as convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire Generation Z population. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution and are primarily representative of the sampled group rather than the broader population.



3.4 Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age group, gender, occupation, income level, and monthly skincare expenditure. The second section measured exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content, including frequency of encountering beauty content, daily TikTok usage, number of influencers followed, and product discovery through TikTok. These items operationalized the exposure construct.

The third section measured influencer credibility using Likert-scale items assessing expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity. The fourth section assessed Korean skincare brand awareness through recognition and recall measures, as well as agreement with statements indicating that TikTok influencers increased awareness of Korean skincare brands. The final section measured consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions, including perceived product quality, innovation, effectiveness, purchase intention, and related behavioral responses such as searching for products or adding them to a shopping cart. All attitudinal items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected online over a two-week period using a structured survey questionnaire. The survey link was distributed through digital platforms commonly used by Generation Z, including Facebook, Messenger, LINE, university group chats and TikTok (via posts, bio link, and direct messages), in order to reach respondents who actively engage with social media. Prior to participation, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary. To ensure confidentiality, no personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were recorded anonymously for academic research purposes only.

3.6 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores) were used to summarize demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, and perceptions of influencer credibility. Inferential statistical analysis was conducted using regression techniques to examine relationships between key variables.

Specifically, regression analyses were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses:

- H1: Exposure → Brand Awareness
- H2: Credibility → Brand Awareness
- H3a: Exposure → Perception
- H3b: Perception → Behavioral Intention

Data were analyzed using PSPP statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency of multi-item constructs, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable.

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine relationships among variables. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. Separate regression models were used to examine the influence of exposure and influencer credibility on brand awareness, as well as the influence of exposure on consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level, and R^2 values were examined to evaluate the explanatory power of the regression models.

Quantitative Results & Discussion

Respondent Profile

A total of 401 valid responses were collected, slightly exceeding the targeted sample size of 400 participants. The majority of respondents were within the 18–24 age group (55.6%), followed by 25–34 years (36.7%). A smaller proportion of respondents were under 18 (5.5%) or above 35 years (2.2%).

This distribution suggests that the survey successfully captured responses from younger adults who are highly active on TikTok and frequently exposed to beauty influencer content. The strong representation of respondents aged 18–24 further enhances the relevance of the findings, as this group is widely recognized as a key audience for influencer-driven beauty marketing.

Exposure to Beauty Content on TikTok

The results indicate that respondents are frequently exposed to skincare and beauty-related content on TikTok. Based on the five-point exposure frequency scale, 52.6% of respondents reported encountering such content “often,” while an additional 19.5% selected “very often.” This means that more than 70% of participants regularly view beauty-related posts on the platform. Only a small proportion of respondents indicated that they rarely or never encounter this type of content. The relatively high mean score further confirms that exposure to beauty influencer content is a consistent component of respondents’ daily digital consumption patterns. These findings suggest that TikTok functions as a highly influential media environment for Generation Z users. The platform’s algorithm-driven content distribution allows beauty-related posts to appear frequently in users’ feeds, increasing the likelihood of repeated exposure to influencer recommendations and product demonstrations. As a result, TikTok serves as an important channel for product discovery and brand visibility within the beauty industry. For Korean skincare brands in particular, the platform provides a powerful space where influencers can introduce products, demonstrate routines, and increase brand recognition among digitally engaged young consumers. These patterns reinforce the growing role of TikTok as a central platform in shaping consumer awareness and early-stage decision-making within the beauty sector.

Perceptions of TikTok Beauty Influencers

Overall, respondents reported favorable perceptions of TikTok beauty influencers across the three credibility dimensions examined in this study. Perceived expertise recorded a mean score of 3.86, indicating that participants generally regard influencers as knowledgeable about skincare products, ingredients, and routines. This suggests that many respondents view influencers as capable of providing useful information and practical advice related to skincare practices. Trustworthiness received a slightly higher mean score of 3.90, reflecting a relatively strong level of confidence in influencer recommendations. This finding indicates that respondents tend to believe that influencers provide reliable opinions and honest product evaluations. Similarly, perceived authenticity achieved a mean score of 3.87, suggesting that respondents largely perceive influencer content as genuine rather than excessively commercialized. The relatively high authenticity score indicates that audiences view influencer-generated content as more relatable and transparent compared to traditional advertising messages. These findings indicate that expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity represent key credibility attributes that influence how Generation Z evaluates TikTok beauty influencers. These dimensions contribute to the perceived reliability and persuasive power of influencer-generated content and serve as an important foundation for influencer effectiveness on the platform. When influencers are perceived as credible and authentic, their recommendations are more likely to attract audience attention, enhance brand recognition, and shape consumer attitudes toward promoted skincare products.

Influence on Korean Skincare Brand Awareness

The results indicate a strong positive influence of TikTok beauty influencers on Korean skincare brand awareness. As illustrated in Figure X, the majority of respondents reported that their awareness of Korean skincare brands increased after viewing content created by TikTok beauty influencers. Specifically, 46.9% of respondents agreed and 25.7% strongly agreed that TikTok influencer content had increased their awareness of Korean skincare brands, resulting in a combined 72.6% positive response rate. In comparison, 20.2% of respondents selected a neutral response, while only a small proportion expressed disagreement (5.7% disagreed and 1.5% strongly disagreed).

These findings suggest that exposure to influencer-generated content on TikTok plays a significant role in shaping brand awareness among Generation Z consumers. The high proportion of positive responses indicates that TikTok beauty influencers function as effective intermediaries who introduce skincare products and brands to audiences. Through product demonstrations, reviews, and skincare routines, influencers help increase brand visibility and familiarity among viewers. Consequently, TikTok serves as an important platform for Korean skincare brands seeking to expand their reach and strengthen brand recognition among younger consumers.

4. Results

4.1 Overview of Analysis

This study examined the impact of TikTok beauty influencer exposure and influencer credibility on Korean skincare brand awareness, perceptions, and behavioral intention among Generation Z consumers. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, H3a, and H3b). Standardized beta coefficients (β), t-values, R^2 values, and significance levels were analyzed to determine the strength and explanatory power of the relationships.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 401 valid responses were analyzed. Descriptive findings indicate that respondents reported relatively high engagement with TikTok beauty influencer content. Exposure to influencer content yielded a mean score of 3.82 (SD = 0.81), suggesting frequent interaction. Influencer credibility demonstrated a mean of 3.87 (SD = 0.78), reflecting generally positive perceptions of expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity. Korean skincare brand awareness recorded a mean of 3.90 (SD = 0.90), while consumer perception (M = 3.97, SD = 0.85) and behavioral intention (M = 3.90, SD = 0.93) were also above the midpoint of the scale. These results suggest that respondents generally hold favorable evaluations of both TikTok beauty influencers and Korean skincare brands.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Regression analyses were conducted to examine the proposed relationships. The results are summarized in Table 1

Table 1 Summary of Regression Results

Hypothesis	Path Tested	β (Standardized)	t-value	R^2	p-value	Decision
H1	Exposure \rightarrow Brand Awareness	.724	20.995	.525	< .001	Supported
H2	Credibility \rightarrow Brand Awareness	.676	18.328	.457	< .001	Supported
H3a	Exposure \rightarrow Perception	.523	12.756	.274	< .001	Supported
H3b	Perception \rightarrow Behavioral Intention	.523	13.584	.274	< .001	Supported

Note: H3a and H3b coefficients are derived from separate simple regression models. The similarity in values occurs because each model includes a single independent variable; therefore, the standardized coefficient (β) is equivalent to the correlation coefficient (R), and R^2 represents the squared value of R. The similarity also reflects comparable effect sizes and does not indicate a reporting error.

4.4 Detailed Interpretation of Regression Findings

The regression results indicate that all proposed hypotheses are statistically supported. Exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content demonstrates the strongest effect on Korean skincare brand awareness ($\beta = .724$, $p < .001$), explaining 52.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .525$). This suggests that repeated exposure significantly enhances brand recognition and recall among Generation Z consumers.

Influencer credibility also shows a strong positive influence on brand awareness ($\beta = .676$, $p < .001$), accounting for 45.7% of the variance. This indicates that perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity contribute substantially to awareness formation.

It is important to note that the values of B, Beta (β), and R appear similar across the regression models. For example, H3a and H3b show identical standardized coefficients ($\beta = .523$) and coefficients of determination ($R^2 = .274$). This occurs because the study employs simple linear regression with a single independent variable. In such cases, the standardized coefficient (β) is equivalent to the correlation coefficient (R), and R^2 represents the squared value of R. Additionally, since all variables are measured using the same Likert scale, the unstandardized coefficient (B) is also very close to the standardized coefficient. Therefore, the similarity in values does not indicate a reporting error but reflects the nature of the analysis.

Overall, the findings provide strong empirical support for all proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, H3a, and H3b). Consistent with H1, exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content was found to have a significant positive influence on Korean skincare brand awareness among Generation Z consumers. In line with H2, influencer credibility attributes specifically expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity also demonstrated a significant positive influence on brand awareness. Furthermore, supporting H3a and H3b, exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content showed a significant positive influence on consumer perceptions, and consumer perceptions subsequently showed a significant positive influence on behavioral intentions toward Korean skincare brands.

Taken together, these results indicate that TikTok influencer marketing operates through both visibility and credibility mechanisms. Exposure enhances brand awareness, credibility strengthens persuasive impact, and positive perceptions translate into stronger behavioral intentions. The consistent support for H1, H2, H3a, and H3b confirms that TikTok functions as an effective digital marketing platform for influencing cognitive and behavioral outcomes among Generation Z consumers in the Korean skincare market.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for all proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, H3a, and H3b) and highlight the significant role of TikTok beauty influencer marketing in shaping brand outcomes among Generation Z consumers. These results can be interpreted through several theoretical perspectives that explain how exposure, credibility, and consumer responses interact within digital environments. First, exposure to TikTok beauty influencer content was identified as the strongest predictor of Korean skincare brand awareness. This finding supports Mere Exposure Theory, which suggests that repeated exposure enhances familiarity, cognitive accessibility, and positive evaluation. Within TikTok's algorithm-driven ecosystem, continuous personalized content delivery increases the frequency with which users encounter beauty-related content, thereby strengthening brand salience and recall. The findings indicate that repeated exposure contributes significantly to awareness formation, reinforcing the idea that familiarity can develop even without deliberate cognitive effort. Second, the significant influence of influencer credibility on brand awareness aligns with the Source Credibility Model. The results demonstrate that credibility attributes expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity play a critical role in shaping how consumers evaluate influencer messages. When influencers are perceived as credible and authentic, their recommendations become more persuasive, memorable, and effective in enhancing brand recognition. In digital contexts, authenticity appears particularly important, as Generation Z consumers tend to value transparency and relatability. In addition, the role of emotional connection between influencers and audiences can be explained through Parasocial Interaction. TikTok influencers often share personal experiences and relatable content, creating a sense of familiarity and perceived intimacy with their followers. This one-sided relationship increases trust and engagement, making audiences more receptive to influencer recommendations. Such relational dynamics further strengthen the persuasive impact of influencer communication, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Furthermore, the relationship between exposure, consumer perceptions, and behavioral intention is consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Given the fast-paced and entertainment-driven nature of TikTok, consumers are more likely to rely on peripheral cues such as relatability, attractiveness, and social proof rather than engaging in extensive cognitive processing. The findings indicate that exposure and credibility cues shape consumer perceptions, which in turn influence behavioral intentions, supporting the idea that persuasion in social media contexts often operates through the peripheral route. Finally, the overall pattern of findings can be understood within the AIDA model, which explains the progression from awareness to action. Exposure increases brand awareness, credibility and emotional connection enhance interest and desire, and positive perceptions lead to behavioral intentions. This demonstrates that TikTok influencer marketing operates as a structured decision-making process in which cognitive and affective responses contribute to consumer behavior.

Limitations

Despite providing meaningful insights, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a convenience sampling technique limits the generalizability of the findings. As a non-probability sampling method, the sample may not fully represent the broader Generation Z population. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution, as they primarily reflect the perceptions of respondents who were accessible and willing to participate. Second, this study employed a cross-sectional research design, which captures data at a single point in time. As a result, causal relationships among variables cannot be firmly established. Third, the

study focuses specifically on TikTok as a single platform and Korean skincare products, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other social media platforms or product categories. Finally, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias or social desirability effects, potentially affecting the accuracy of the responses.

Future Research

Future research is encouraged to address these limitations by employing probability sampling techniques to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Researchers may also adopt longitudinal or experimental research designs to better examine causal relationships and observe changes in consumer behavior over time. In addition, future studies could expand the scope by comparing different social media platforms such as Instagram or YouTube, or by examining other product categories beyond Korean skincare to improve the external validity of the results. Moreover, incorporating additional variables such as consumer trust, brand loyalty, digital engagement, or cultural factors may provide a more comprehensive understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness. Future research may also utilize behavioral data or experimental methods to complement self-reported measures and enhance the robustness of findings.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of TikTok beauty influencer marketing on Korean skincare brand awareness, consumer perceptions, and behavioral intentions among Generation Z consumers. The findings confirm that influencer marketing on TikTok functions as an effective mechanism for shaping both cognitive and behavioral outcomes. In particular, exposure to influencer content and influencer credibility were identified as key drivers of brand awareness, while consumer perceptions played a critical mediating role in translating awareness into behavioral intention. These results highlight that influencer marketing operates through an interconnected process in which visibility, credibility, and perception jointly influence consumer decision-making.

The study contributes to the literature by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, including Mere Exposure Theory, the Source Credibility Model, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, within a TikTok-specific context. By combining these frameworks, the study offers a more comprehensive explanation of how digital influencer marketing operates across awareness formation, perception development, and behavioral intention among Generation Z consumers. It also extends existing research by emphasizing the role of algorithm-driven exposure and short-form content in shaping consumer responses. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that skincare brands should prioritize consistent and repeated content exposure, collaborate with influencers who demonstrate high levels of expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity, and design content that is engaging, relatable, and visually appealing. In highly competitive digital environments, such strategies can enhance brand visibility, strengthen consumer trust, and improve the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

In conclusion, TikTok influencer marketing represents a powerful and measurable strategy for increasing brand awareness and influencing consumer behavior among Generation Z. As social media platforms continue to evolve, understanding how exposure, credibility, and perception interact within digital ecosystems will be essential for both researchers and practitioners seeking to optimize marketing effectiveness.

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