

Impact of opinion leader credibility attributes on purchase intention: moderating effect of social platforms.

Exploratory study among young Algerian consumers of cosmetic products.

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BENARAB Sihem^{*}, Higher School of Commerce, Algeria

s_benarab@esc-alger.dz

ORCID iD: 0009-0009-6729-9143

ANNABI benaissa, Higher School of Commerce, Algeria

b_annabi@esc-alger.dz

ORCID iD: 0009-0006-8434-4020

Abstract:

In a context of strong digitalization of influencer marketing, this study explores how the attributes of perceived credibility of beauty content creators (trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise) influence the purchase intention of cosmetic products among young algerian women. It also examines the moderating role of the social platform used (Instagram vs TikTok) in this relationship. A qualitative approach was adopted through semi-structured interviews conducted with young consumers with regular exposure to influencers on both platforms. The results reveal that reliability is the most decisive attribute, often associated with simplicity,

^{*} Author correspondents

perceived authenticity and social proximity to the influencer. Attractiveness acts as an attention-grabber, but is not enough to generate purchase intent without perceived credibility. Expertise, for its part, is perceived through mastery and shared personal experience. The study also highlights the influence of the channel used: TikTok is perceived as more spontaneous and entertaining, reinforcing emotional engagement, while Instagram conveys a more polished image. These specificities affect the reception of credibility attributes in different ways. Finally, perceived socio-cultural identification with the influencer has been shown to be central to the formation of purchase intention. The article discusses the managerial and theoretical implications of these results in the context of influence marketing.

Keywords : perceived credibility, purchase intention, influencer, digital platform, opinion leader.

Jel Classification Codes : M31, L83, L86

1- Introduction

The rise of social networks has considerably altered commercial communication practices by giving rise to a new form of social intermediation embodied by social network opinion leaders, commonly referred to as influencers. Influencers, who are particularly active on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, now play an important role in promoting products and brands, particularly in sectors with strong symbolic implications such as cosmetics. Their power of influence relies heavily on their ability to establish a close relationship with their audience, through attributes such as perceived reliability, attractiveness or perceived expertise (Ohanian, 1990); (Lou & Yuan, 2019); (Sokolova & Perez, 2021). For (Lou & Taylor, 2022) the relationship between influencers and subscribers is not uniform from one platform to another, and subscribers' experiences and their parasocial relationship with influencers depend on the technological context (format, interactivity, visibility) of the platform used.

Some previous studies (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018); (Lou & Taylor, 2022); (Al-Zoubi, M. M., 2022), (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) have highlighted the persuasive effectiveness of influencers as well as the differentiated role that social platforms can play in building this influence. However, in-depth comparison between platforms, particularly in terms of their impact on the perception of influencers' credibility and on purchase intention, has yet to be fully explored.

In the Algerian context, empirical research into the impact of influencers is still limited, even though interest in the issue has recently grown. Some research studies, notably those by (Benali & Tahri, 2024) and (Fari & Mouloudj, 2024) have highlighted the importance of perceived credibility, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and online trust in shaping the purchase intention of cosmetics consumers, particularly via the TikTok platform, but to

our knowledge, no research has jointly explored the attributes of perceived credibility, namely reliability, attractiveness and expertise, their influence on purchase intention, and the moderation exerted by the differentiated use of social platforms in this process.

The choice of Instagram and Tiktok for our study is based on recent data showing that these two platforms are widely adopted in the Algerian digital landscape. According to data from (DataReportal, 2025), Instagram has around 12 million active users in Algeria, while TikTok has 21.1 million active users in Algeria.

This choice is also based on a comparative analysis of the penetration and development of social platforms in Algeria. The table below highlights the marked growth in the potential advertising reach of TikTok and Instagram between 2024 and 2025 compared with the other main digital platforms used in Algeria.

Table 1: Increase in the advertising reach of social platforms in Algeria

Platform	Active users (2025)	Change in advertising reach (%)
Instagram	12 million	+5,3 %
TikTok	21.1 million	+21,2 %
Facebook	25.6 million	+2,8 %
YouTube	21.1 million	- 7,5%

Source: DataReportal, Digital 2025 – Algeria

The question of the study:

Our study attempts to answer the following central question: **"How do the attributes of the perceived credibility of content creators influence the intention to purchase cosmetic products among young Algerian women? And how can the differentiated use of social platforms moderate the credibility-purchase intention relationship?"**

Based on these considerations, our analysis will be organised around the following research questions:

- How do Algerian consumers perceive the credibility of a content creator in terms of her reliability, attractiveness and expertise?
- To what extent do the attributes of perceived credibility influence the intention to purchase cosmetic products promoted by content creators?
- How does the platform used (Instagram vs. TikTok) moderate the influence of content creators' perceived credibility on the purchase intention of their subscribers?

The objectif of the study

The aim of this research is to examine the influence of the perceived reliability, attractiveness and expertise of beauty content creators on the purchase intention of cosmetic products among young Algerian consumers, as well as the moderating role that the social platform used, such as Instagram and TikTok, can play on the relationship between perceived credibility and purchase intention. Although the attributes of perceived credibility are recognised as key factors influencing purchase intention, their perceived weight may vary depending on the platforms used.

The importance of the study

The choice of our subject is justified by a dual objective:

- On a theoretical level: it contributes to a better understanding of the mechanisms of digital influence by analysing the differentiated effect of social platforms and the psychological and social dynamics underlying purchase intention.

- On a practical level: it aims to offer concrete avenues for cosmetics brands wishing to collaborate with female influencers in Algeria, helping them to adapt their campaigns to the specific characteristics of the platforms used and the expectations of the local public.

Methodology

To answer our research questions, we decided to divide our work into 3 parts. The first part will be devoted to a literature review dealing with influencers, the role of their credibility attributes on consumers' purchase intentions, and the distinctive characteristics of the platforms selected for our study. In the second part, we present the methodology used for our qualitative study. The final section presents the results of our exploratory study. Our findings will be discussed and used to suggest avenues for future research.

The epistemological position of this research is based on an interpretativist stance, in line with the exploratory objectives of the study. Interpretativism considers that social reality is not objective and unique, but is constructed by social actors through their experiences, interactions and the meanings they attribute to phenomena (Alharahsheh & Abraham, 2020). From this point of view, understanding the perceived influence of opinion leaders on intentions to buy cosmetics in Algeria involves analysing the subjective representations of consumers and their way of interpreting the perceived characteristics of influencers as a function of their use of digital platforms.

The reasoning we have adopted is of an abductive nature, insofar as it is not a question of testing hypotheses based on existing theories or of making categories emerge in a totally inductive way. For us, abduction means going back and forth

between the literature and the field, constantly bringing the empirical data from the study into dialogue with the theoretical concepts (Timmermans & Tavory, 2024)

This interpretative and abductive approach is particularly well suited to qualitative research based on understanding the mechanisms of influence in local contexts that are still little explored (Gioia, 2012); (Lincoln, 2017).

2- Literature review

2-1-From the traditional opinion leader to the social media influencer

The notion of the opinion leader, historically linked to the work of (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), has evolved profoundly with the emergence of digital environments. While it initially referred to influential people within restricted social circles such as family, peers or colleagues, the notion of opinion leader has evolved with the rise of social networks, giving rise to a new figure, the digital influencer. The digital influencer can be defined as an individual who has a significant audience on social networks and who is able to influence opinions, attitudes or purchasing behaviour as a result of content posted on these platforms (Freberg et al, 2011), (Garg & Bakshi, 2024) . According to (Vernette, 2007), an influencer is "an attractive person with psychological, physical and social qualities, whose knowledge of a given product category is considered credible. Their beliefs and behaviours are likely to influence the beliefs and brand choices of those around them in this product category". According to (Lou & Yuan, 2019) an influencer on social networks is first and foremost a content generator, someone who has expert status in a specific field, who has cultivated a considerable number of captive followers, who have marketing

value for brands, by regularly producing valuable content via social networks.

While the influencer can be seen as the heir to the traditional opinion leader, he can be distinguished from it by the specific characteristics of the media framework in which he speaks, a public space that is governed by market algorithms, and by the professionalisation of his communication practices (De Veirman et al, 2017). Whereas the traditional opinion leader exercised his influence in an informal setting based on spontaneous social interactions, the influencer is part of a personal branding strategy in which monetisation and visibility are central to the approach.

Influencer marketing therefore refers to all strategies that mobilise content creators perceived as authentic or experts, with the aim of promoting brands or products to target communities (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016); (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). It is based on a promise of proximity, authenticity and legitimacy, in apparent contrast to traditional forms of advertising.

This development raises the question of the perceived credibility of influencers and their actual ability to guide purchasing intentions, particularly in sectors that are highly sensitive to image and emotion, such as cosmetics. With this in mind, recent literature has taken a close interest in analysing the dimensions that make up this credibility, such as reliability, expertise or attractiveness, and their influence on the reception of persuasive messages.

2-2-Perceived characteristics of opinion leaders on social networks

Opinion leaders on social networks, commonly known as influencers, have become major players capable of shaping consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. Their influence is rooted in specific perceived characteristics that make them identifiable and trusted by their audience.

Following on from the work of (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), opinion leaders are defined as people capable of influencing the attitudes or behaviour of others, thanks to their perceived expertise, their social visibility, or their proximity to their audience. Unlike traditional communicators, these influential figures do not necessarily have institutional status, but base their legitimacy on their ability to shape opinions within their social networks.

Research has identified several key attributes of opinion leaders. They are seen as credible, knowledgeable, communicative and socially active (Flynn & Eastman, 1996). Opinion leaders exert their influence horizontally, often within circles of acquaintances, and their power to influence is based more on the relationship of trust they build with their subscribers than on a formal hierarchical or expert position (Savolainen, 2021). In the digital context, this influence is reinforced by the regular production of content that is perceived as useful or authentic, which increases visibility and engagement. In addition, the proliferation of social platforms has helped to redefine the contours of opinion leadership, which is now embodied by content creators who are perceived as accessible, and authentic, and who are capable of influencing purchase intentions in various fields, including cosmetics (Hussain & al, 2025)

2-3-Perceived credibility of opinion leaders and its impact on purchase intention

The perceived credibility of opinion leaders is an important lever in their ability to influence consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly in digital environments where trust can be difficult to establish and maintain. It is understood in the literature as a multidimensional construct, which includes the perceived reliability, expertise and attractiveness of the influencer (Ohanian, 1990), (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), which condition the reception of persuasive messages, and influence the intention to purchase products promoted by opinion leaders.

2-3-1- Perceived reliability and purchase intention

Perceived trustworthiness refers to the sincerity, transparency and personal consistency of the influencer's communications (Lou & Yuan, 2019), (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). It establishes an environment of perceived trust, which will reduce the perception of commercial manipulation. In the field of cosmetics, several studies have shown that influencers who are perceived as authentic generate a higher intention to buy, since their discourse seems to be driven and guided by their personal experience rather than financial interest (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). Consumers identify more with influencers whom they consider to be 'real' and close to their audience, which increases their persuasive effectiveness.

2-3-2- Perceived expertise and purchase intention

Perceived expertise is defined as the competence attributed to the opinion leader in a specific field (Hovland & al, 1953). An influencer with a broad and in-depth knowledge of ingredients, skincare routines or the effects of beauty and cosmetics products inspires a favourable judgement of product quality. This perceived

expertise has a positive impact on the credibility of the message and thus increases purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Consumers are more inclined to follow the recommendations of an opinion leader whom they consider to be competent and an expert in their field, (Fadel & al, 2022) especially in medium or high involvement product categories such as cosmetics (Lou & Yuan, 2019), (Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

2-3-3- Perceived attractiveness and purchase intention

Perceived attractiveness encompasses physical appearance, personal style and charisma (Ohanian, 1990). This is an essential dimension of the source's credibility in influence marketing. There are two main aspects: physical attractiveness (linked to appearance and lifestyle) and social attractiveness (familiarity, sympathy, perceived similarity) (Kim & Kim, 2021). Several authors point out that the persuasive effect of the influencer is enhanced when recipients perceive a similarity in terms of values, age or background (Kiecker & Cowles, 2001), (Chen & al, 2024),. This similarity or homophily encourages better reception of the message, especially in beauty and cosmetics communities, where visual and emotional identification is strong (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). Finally, as shown by (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), perceived attractiveness increases the credibility of the message, which stimulates purchase intention. In the digital context, these traits are particularly valued on predominantly visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where images play a central role in building relationships with followers (Lou & Yuan, 2019); (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). This dimension involves processes of identification and social comparison, particularly among young consumers who link the beauty of the influencer to the effectiveness of the recommended product. Attractiveness thus plays a motivational role that can reinforce purchase intention by activating mimicry

desire mechanisms and reinforcing the self-image projected by the purchase of the product (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

2-4- Purchase intention: the key to measuring consumer behaviour

In marketing research, purchase intention is one of the most widely used constructs for predicting consumer behaviour. It refers to the subjective probability that an individual will purchase a product or service as a result of being exposed to a marketing or communication stimulus (Ajzen, 1991). In the digital environment, particularly on social networks, this intention represents a central indicator for predicting the performance of influencer campaigns (Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

Conceptually, purchase intention is often anchored in the extension of the reasoned action model (TRA) or the planned behaviour model (TPB), which consider intention to be the best predictor of actual behaviour, provided that the individual has some control over their decision (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of marketing influence, several studies highlight the significant impact of variables such as source credibility, identification and the parasocial relationship with the opinion leader on consumer purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019) ; (Lou & Taylor, 2022), (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020); (Chidiac & Bowden, 2022).

Purchase intention can be affected by cognitive factors (perceived quality, perceived usefulness), affective factors (attitude towards the brand or product) or social factors (conformity, norms, influence of others). On social networks, purchase intention is sensitive, in particular, to the parasocial relationship with the opinion leader (Han, Lee, & Masuda, 2022), (Lou & Taylor, 2022), perceived authenticity (Garg & Bakshi, 2024), and the degree of engagement that the content generates (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

2-5-Social platforms as moderators of perceived influence

2-5-1- Characteristics of social platforms

Research such as that by (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), (Lou & Taylor, 2022) indicates that the type of platform used influences the strength and nature of the impact of the source's characteristics on consumers' purchase intentions. This moderating role is largely explained by the socio-technical specificities of each network, such as interaction modes, content distribution algorithms and the perceived degree of proximity or intimacy with the influencer (Lou & Yuan, 2019); (De Veirman et al, 2020).

Digital social media platforms are now essential channels for prescribing, although they differ in the way they structure social interactions, content formats and engagement modalities (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021), (Al-Zoubi, M. M., 2022). (Lou & Taylor, 2022) have developed a theory relating to the characteristics of digital platforms, classifying them according to the following dimensions:

- **Media Wealth:** shapes the level of information and interaction that influencers have with their followers, which has a profound impact on the latter's experience of influencers on social networks.
- **Self-disclosure:** refers to the ease with which influencers share personal and authentic content, enabling them to forge more intimate relationships with their followers.
- **Platform intimacy:** refers to the feeling of emotional closeness and the establishment of a close relationship between the influencer and the subscriber generated by the use of the platform.

- **Modality:** describes the type of content created and distributed on social networking platforms, such as textual, audio, audiovisual and multimedia content.
- **Usage:** refers to the main function of the platform according to users (instagram: pleasure/ Tiktok: entertainment). The use of the platform can have an impact on the informative and entertaining value of the content generated by influencers, which can influence the trust of subscribers and the results of campaigns.

Instagram and TikTok make full use of the potential of influencer marketing to shape consumer behaviour, but with different socio-technical logics. On Instagram, influencers frequently collaborate with brands to produce carefully staged sponsored content and product reviews which, thanks to aesthetic enhancement and aspirational storytelling, prove particularly effective in driving purchase intent (Ki & Kim, 2019); (Marwick, 2015). TikTok, for its part, relies on short, creative and interactive formats in which influencers use humour, spontaneity and the viral effect to capture attention and persuade, particularly via dynamic product demonstrations (Abidin, 2021).

In both channels, the influencer's perceived credibility plays a central role in persuasive effectiveness. On Instagram, this credibility is based primarily on the ability of influencers to generate authentic, consistent and aesthetically pleasing content, fostering trust and an emotional connection with their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). On TikTok, credibility is based more on the spontaneity, accessibility and emotional impact of content, supported by a sense of proximity and the development of parasocial relationships (Abidin, 2021) ; (Lou & Yuan, 2019); (Omar & Dequan, 2020). These differences highlight the importance of socio-technical environments in how influencer characteristics affect purchase intention.

2-5-2- Instagram and Tiktok: functional characteristics and differences

➤ Instagram

The social platform Instagram has established itself as a benchmark platform for influencers, particularly in the lifestyle, fashion and beauty sectors, thanks to its visual and narrative orientation. This social network values the production of aesthetically pleasing, carefully crafted content, often accompanied by detailed captions, allowing influencers to showcase products and services in an aspirational setting (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021), (De Veirman et al, 2017). As a space for aesthetising the self, Instagram encourages the construction of a valorising image of the influencer, particularly in the world of cosmetics, where the stylised presentation of expertise plays a central role in the perception of credibility (Casaló et al, 2021). Content is generally carefully framed, visually coherent and quality-oriented, helping to reinforce the perception of the issuer's attractiveness and competence (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). In this context, users expect publications that are inspiring, visually pleasing and perceived as authentic, which can increase the impact of stylised authenticity on purchase intention (Audrezet et al, 2020).

➤ TikTok

The Tiktok platform has rapidly established itself as a key platform for digital influence, based on a format of short videos that encourage creativity, spontaneity and engagement (Jeyhan & Pangaribuan, 2023), (Sergio Barta, 2023). Its algorithm, which adapts content to the interests of each user, has encouraged the emergence of challenges, viral trends and participative formats often driven by influencers (Abidin, 2021); (Jeyhan & Pangaribuan, 2023). This dynamic mode of distribution, based on narrative and spontaneity, is particularly effective for demonstrating products,

generating a more immediate and emotional intention to buy. Unlike Instagram, where aesthetics take precedence, TikTok promotes content that is less filtered, more spontaneous and narrative, where the perceived authenticity is based on proximity, displayed vulnerability and direct emotional identification. This type of communication encourages the building of parasocial relationships and a perceived intimacy with influencers, thereby strengthening trust, commitment and persuasion (Omar & Dequan, 2020). In this context, the natural authenticity and accessibility of creators become important factors in the formation of purchase intention.

3- Methodology of the exploratory study

Our study is based on semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of young Algerian women (aged 18-35), a segment that is particularly active on Instagram and TikTok, (Radji, 2024), (start.io, 2024), (DataReportal, 2025) and strongly targeted by influencer marketing strategies in the cosmetics sector. The semi-structured interview guide is a preferred tool in qualitative research for exploring in depth the representations, perceptions and motivations of individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This type of interview enables discussions to be structured around pre-defined themes, while leaving respondents considerable freedom of expression. It thus offers a good compromise between a flexible framework and richness of discourse, which is particularly relevant in the study of a poorly documented phenomenon, such as the perceived influence of opinion leaders in the Algerian context. Our interview guide was designed on the basis of dimensions identified in the literature, in particular the perceived credibility of the influencer through his or her attributes of reliability, attractiveness and expertise, and also incorporates questions designed to capture the differentiated effect of the platforms used on the reception of influence messages.

The data is processed using an interpretative thematic analysis (Mucchielli, 2021), to bring out the regularities of meaning, subjective logics and tensions in the discourse through systematic and iterative coding inscribed in an abductive logic.

3-1- Sample and data collection

The sample consisted of 15 young Algerian women aged between 18 and 35, recruited using the purposive sampling method (Mucchielli, 2021). For all the interviewees, we ensured that they were active users of the two social platforms studied, TikTok and Instagram, that they followed at least one beauty influencer on these two platforms and that they had been exposed to content about cosmetic products. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face or by telephone, each lasting an average of 30 to 45 minutes. The interview guide was designed around the three attributes of the influencer's perceived credibility (Ohanian, 1990), as well as their potential influence on purchase intention. It also includes questions aimed at exploring the differentiated role that the platform used can play in the reception of persuasive content and in the perception of the influencer's credibility.

3-2- Conduct of the interviews :

The interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks, either face-to-face or remotely, depending on the availability of the participants. The remote mode (telephone call) was preferred when geographical distance or personal constraints prevented a physical meeting. A semi-directive interview guide was used to ensure a degree of consistency in the topics covered, while leaving the participants free to develop their answers. After an introduction explaining the objectives of the study and the guarantees of confidentiality, the interviews successively addressed the perceptions of the influencers followed (reliability, attractiveness, expertise), exposure to brand content, the effect felt on the desire to

buy, and the perceived role of the platform used. All the interviews were transcribed for rigorous analysis. Data saturation was reached around the twelfth interview, when the responses became redundant and no new themes seemed to emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2021), the last three interviews confirmed the theoretical saturation and the regularities observed.

3-4- Method of analysis

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach, consistent with its main objective: to understand the perceived mechanisms of influence of opinion leaders on the intention to buy cosmetic products among young Algerian consumers. Our aim is to understand how perceived credibility is constructed in their comments, how it is linked to their own purchase intentions, and to what extent the platform used moderates this perceived relationship.

The analysis of the data is based on an interpretative thematic analysis (Mucchielli, 2021); (Braun & Clarke, 2021) which aims to identify the recurrences of meaning, oppositions, tensions and discursive logics that emerge from the participants' discourse. Beyond simple descriptive categorisation, the method adopted aims to interpret the subjective justifications, symbolic meanings and forms of rationalisation built around the experience of subscribers and their reception of persuasive messages.

The analysis followed an iterative approach in which each new interview contributed to refining certain emerging categories, enriching the coding process and reconsidering the initial theoretical frameworks. This process of permanent adjustment is based on an abductive logic (Timmermans & Tavory, 2024), typical of exploratory research, where the aim is not to test previously defined hypotheses but to bring out interpretative avenues based on the regularities and tensions observed in the

empirical data. A constant back-and-forth between empirical data, coding and literature thus enables us to construct an interpretative framework that is both grounded in the field and theoretically supported.

4- Analysis of the results, discussion and limitations of the research

4-1- Interpretation of results

4-1-1- Attributes of perceived credibility and their link with purchase intention

The participants spontaneously mobilised the three classic attributes of influencer credibility - trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise - to justify whether or not they were receptive to the content proposed.

- **Trustworthiness** is highly valued, especially when the influencer uses simple language and adopts a sincere posture, without excessive staging. This feeling of authenticity seems to reinforce trust and encourage the intention to buy, especially when the content is not perceived as purely commercial. The participants perceive TikTok as a more raw, spontaneous and real space. They associate reliability with unfiltered formats, more natural settings and direct communication. Some go so far as to say that "on TikTok you can see the real person behind the influencer". This reliability fosters trust and gives the impression that the message is not motivated solely by commercial interests. However, on Instagram, trustworthiness is perceived as staged, more elaborate and sometimes considered artificial. This can create a gap between the content and the reality perceived by the audience.

-**Attractiveness**, whether physical, stylistic or charismatic, activates mechanisms of projection or inspiration. Several participants expressed their desire to "look like" the influencer or

adopt her cosmetic habits to reinforce their own self-image, thus indirectly contributing to the motivation to buy. Instagram is seen as an aesthetic showcase where influencers carefully display their image. The attention paid to visuals and staging reinforces symbolic value and visual appeal. While this increases perceived attractiveness, it sometimes reduces identification or proximity, because the gap between the influencer and the ordinary consumer is too wide. On TikTok, on the other hand, attractiveness is perceived as more realistic, closer to the "everyday life of Algerian girls", which opens the way to another form of connection.

-Expertise is recognised when the influencer demonstrates a good knowledge of the products, uses a professional vocabulary or shares advice that is perceived as useful and specific. This expertise adds credibility to the message, and often leads to a planned or actual action. The young women we interviewed associate the way the products are highlighted, the quality of the videos and the accuracy of the information (advice, comparisons, routines) with professional expertise, which they see more clearly on Instagram. Some, however, recognise that TikTok also allows for learning (particularly via short tutorials), but the information is judged to be less in-depth, sometimes more viral and superficial.

These three dimensions, although distinct, seem to interact in the construction of overall credibility, which directly influences the purchase intention expressed in the speeches.

4-1-2- Overall perceived credibility: a differentiated influence depending on the platform used

The same influencers are perceived differently depending on the social platform used. Instagram is associated with content that is visually polished and carefully constructed, but is sometimes perceived as being too commercial. TikTok, on the other hand, is

seen as a place of spontaneity and proximity, where content is considered more natural and therefore more authentic. This differentiated perception modifies the way credibility attributes are received, and consequently impacts on the relationship between perceived credibility and purchase intention. Several participants said they were more influenced by recommendations made on TikTok, because they perceived a more sincere link with the influencer. This can be explained by the fact that overall credibility cannot be reduced to the additive sum of the three attributes. On TikTok, authenticity and emotional closeness to the influencer generate a stronger relationship of trust, even if attractiveness or perceived expertise are lower. Respondents are more likely to say they trust a TikTok recommendation to try a product, because they perceive less commercial intent and more transparency. This reflects a subjective hierarchy of attributes, where authenticity and emotional closeness take precedence over the rest in the formation of overall credibility.

4-1-3- Purchasing behaviour and declared intentions.

The interviews reveal several concrete cases where recommendations led to actual or intended purchases. The majority of participants stated that they had been "tempted" on several occasions by products seen in the influencer's videos, especially when she presented a product test, shared her personal opinion or showed a before/after result. However, some respondents stressed that they first check the opinions of other internet users by reading the comments or wait for promotions before making a purchase.

These accounts show that the intention to buy is built up gradually, fuelled by the repetition of messages, the trust placed in the influencer and the perceived quality of the recommendation.

The intention to buy is not systematically triggered by the quality of the content or the technical expertise; it is more influenced by: emotional closeness, perceived trust, identification with the influencer, perceived credibility, and the perception of a need or a real, perceived effect on the creator. Instagram sometimes encourages aesthetic admiration without triggering a purchase. TikTok more easily generates an impulse to try something on.

Finally, despite clear intentions, certain obstacles such as negative post-purchase experiences or mistrust linked to comments can alter confidence and moderate the overall effect of influence.

4-2- Discussion

These findings converge with several recent studies. According to (Lou & Yuan, 2019) the credibility attributes of influencers play a fundamental role in purchase intention, but their impact varies according to the narrative form and the channel used. As Instagram is more oriented towards aesthetic enhancement and self-presentation, attributes such as attractiveness and professional expertise are naturally reinforced (Casaló et al, 2021), (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

On the other hand, TikTok favours content that is more spontaneous, embodied, often humorous or narrative, which may increase the reliability perceived by Internet users. In our study, this reliability is not limited to the simple sincerity of the content, but is rooted in the emotional and socio-cultural proximity expressed through the tone, language and scenarios proposed. These results are in line with the findings of (Abidin, 2021), (Omar & Dequan, 2020), for whom the brief, embodied form of TikTok videos encourages the perception of 'unprocessed' authenticity, reinforcing trust in the influencer.

The qualitative study thus confirms that the platform acts as a contextual moderator, influencing the way in which the attributes of credibility are perceived. Moreover, the idea that visual attractiveness and perceived competence are more influential on Instagram corroborates the observations of (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019), (Lou & Yuan, 2019) on the use of aesthetic codes as vectors of legitimacy.

The results of this exploratory study confirm the central role of perceived credibility attributes in the process of influence exerted by creators of beauty content, particularly on young Algerian consumers, in line with the work of (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). These attributes act as cognitive and affective levers which fuel the intention to buy, although this intention remains modulated by other contextual factors.

One of the key contributions of this research lies in the identification of the moderating role of the social platform used (Instagram vs TikTok), in line with the observations of (Lou & Taylor, 2022), (Chidiac & Bowden, 2022). The participants perceive Instagram as more aesthetic but potentially more commercial, whereas TikTok favours an emotional closeness and a more spontaneous reception of messages. This discrepancy influences the way in which credibility is constructed and received, and justifies its effect as a moderating variable.

Furthermore, the emergence of a socio-cultural identification mechanism constitutes an original contribution in the Algerian context. While previous studies refer to perceived similarity or parasocial relationships (Schouten et al, 2020), (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), (Sokolova & Perez, 2021), (Han, Lee, & Masuda, 2022), the respondents here emphasise elements such as language, lifestyle, social experiences or cultural references.

4-3- Limitations and future directions

This study has certain limitations inherent in the qualitative approach adopted. Firstly, the results we have obtained cannot be generalised to the entire population, as the data was taken from a limited, contextual sample. What's more, the perceptions gathered remain anchored in a given moment, with no hindsight on the long-term effects. A quantitative survey, using a larger sample and a structural analysis model, would enable the links highlighted in this study to be tested rigorously, in particular the moderating effect of the platform used (TikTok vs Instagram) and the mediating role of perceived socio-cultural identification.

The second limitation of this study lies in the choice of a single application sector, cosmetics. Although this sector is particularly relevant in the context of influence marketing, the dynamics of engagement, perceived credibility and purchase intention may vary according to the type of product or service being promoted. For example, the evaluation criteria and decision-making process will not be the same for technological goods, food products or cultural services. It would therefore be appropriate to extend future research to other sectors in order to assess the transferability of the results. Finally, other variables could also be explored, such as perceived inspiration, the frequency and duration of exposure to content, the perceived quality of the content, or the feeling of proximity or perceived homophily. These avenues pave the way for broader investigations, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, to refine our understanding of the mechanisms of influence in multi-platform digital contexts.

5- Conclusion

The aim of this research was to understand how the perceived credibility attributes of content creators influence the purchase intention of cosmetic products among young Algerian women, while examining the moderating role of the social platform in the relationship between the perceived credibility of influencers and purchase intention.

Our qualitative study shows that the attributes of perceived credibility each play a distinct role in the influence exerted by beauty content creators. Reliability, often associated with spontaneity and naturalness, is strongly felt on TikTok, a platform perceived as more 'real' and emotional. Attractiveness, meanwhile, is reinforced by Instagram's visual and aesthetic format, which emphasises style and professionalism. Expertise is also better perceived on Instagram, particularly through more aesthetic and polished content. The young women surveyed associate Instagram with a stronger form of expertise and attractiveness, through more polished and professional content. Conversely, TikTok is perceived as a more authentic space.

However, despite the greater expertise and appeal of Instagram, several respondents said they trusted the same influencer more on TikTok. This can be explained by a stronger perception of authenticity, sincerity and a more direct link with the audience. This may demonstrate that perceived credibility is not simply the sum of the attributes, but can be more strongly impacted by a single dominant attribute.

We found that reliability had a strong impact on purchase intention, with this attribute emerging as the most influential in the decision or desire to buy. Attractiveness and expertise are certainly present and important, especially on Instagram, but prove to be less decisive because they do not create a feeling of proximity or

sincerity. This is reflected in an overall higher perceived credibility on TikTok, despite a stronger perception of attractiveness and expertise on Instagram, where the reception of the message, and not the content alone, plays a crucial role. The platform influences perceived credibility, and therefore indirectly purchase intent.

Over and above the classic attributes of credibility, this research has enabled the emergence of identity and cultural dynamics specific to the Algerian context, reinforcing the relevance of socio-cultural identification as a variable of interest for future research. It also suggests that perceived credibility is not simply the sum of objective characteristics, but results from a complex balance between content, broadcasting context, perceived proximity and cultural appropriateness. It underlines the value of an approach combining social psychology, digital marketing and cultural anchoring to understand the new logic of persuasion in the age of social networks.

From a managerial point of view, these results encourage cosmetics brands operating in Algeria to work with influencers who are perceived to be culturally close to their audience, and to adapt their campaigns according to the codes specific to each platform. TikTok, in particular, appears to be a highly persuasive space for recommendations perceived as natural and authentic.

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