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AI-GENERATED AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT AND PURCHASE INTENTION THROUGH PERCEIVED AUTHENTICITY ON TIKTOK

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships of AI-generated content (AIGC) and user-generated content (UGC) with purchase intention and the mediating role of perceived authenticity among TikTok users in Lhokseumawe, Indonesia. A quantitative survey employed purposive sampling and an online questionnaire. Of 133 responses received, 126 met the eligibility criteria. Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling with SmartPLS 4. AIGC was positively associated with perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.270$, $p = .001$), but its direct relationship with purchase intention was not significant ($\beta = -0.075$, $p = .545$). UGC was positively associated with perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.486$, $p < .001$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.302$, $p = .023$). Perceived authenticity was also positively associated with purchase intention ($\beta = 0.397$, $p < .001$). Significant indirect relationships were identified for AIGC ($\beta = 0.107$, $p = .009$) and UGC ($\beta = 0.193$, $p = .002$). The model explained 47.1% of the variance in perceived authenticity and 34.9% in purchase intention. These findings support attention to authenticity in digital content strategies, while the local, observational survey limits causal interpretation and generalization.

Keywords: AI-generated content; perceived authenticity; purchase intention; TikTok; user-generated content

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing places product information within the communication environments that consumers use for entertainment and social interaction. A potential buyer can encounter advertisements, product demonstrations, and personal experiences before making a purchasing decision. Dwivedi et al. (2021) identify the interactions between digital technologies and consumer responses as a significant research concern. For businesses, this raises the question of how audiences evaluate messages from different creators and whether those evaluations contribute to purchase intention. TikTok brings these information sources together through an algorithmic feed that shapes video discovery and users' experiences of content (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). In Indonesia, Dewa and Safitri (2021) examined TikTok's use for culinary promotion, illustrating its relevance to business communication. Product-related videos can introduce unfamiliar offerings, provide practical information, and prompt further searches. Purchase intention therefore provides a useful outcome for examining how this communication enters consumer evaluation.

Two forms of content are central to this study: artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) and user-generated content (UGC). AIGC uses generative systems to produce text, images, and other media from supplied information and instructions (Cao et al., 2023). UGC comprises material that individuals create and share through social platforms. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) emphasize public availability, creative effort, and production outside conventional professional routines. Here, these categories are examined through consumers' perceptions of AI-produced promotional material and product-related content shared by TikTok users. Content origin alone does not determine persuasiveness. Realistic visuals and clear information may support favorable AIGC evaluations without establishing that audiences consider a message honest. UGC can communicate personal experience, but individual authorship does not guarantee accurate claims. Paris and Donovan (2019) explain how both sophisticated and conventional techniques can manipulate audiovisual material. Their analysis supports distinguishing content origin from the audience's assessment of authenticity.

Perceived authenticity concerns whether consumers regard communication as genuine, honest, and transparent. Napoli et al. (2014) conceptualize brand authenticity as a consumer evaluation, while Audrezet et al. (2020) examine the difficulties commercial pressures create for authenticity in influencer communication. These perspectives suggest that a message's value depends partly on how audiences interpret its presentation and commercial purpose. Favorable content evaluations may consequently relate to purchase intention both directly and through perceived authenticity.

Ren et al. (2023) investigate influencer type, regulatory focus, perceived authenticity, and purchase intention. Yang (2025) examines how algorithmic transparency and brand reputation condition responses to AIGC advertising. These studies address related questions in other empirical settings. The present study examines how evaluations of AIGC and UGC relate to purchase intention within a shared model of TikTok users in Lhokseumawe, considering both content constructs and the proposed authenticity mechanism together.

Preliminary observations involving 30 active TikTok users in Lhokseumawe motivated attention to confidence in product-related content and the credibility attributed to personal user experiences. These observations informed the research problem. The formal analysis uses survey responses from 126 eligible participants, providing evidence within a defined local audience.

The research examines the direct relationships of AIGC and UGC with purchase intention, their relationships with perceived authenticity, and their indirect relationships with intention through authenticity. It also estimates the direct relationship between authenticity and intention. This structure distinguishes the statistical pathways connecting content evaluations to purchasing consideration. The evidence can inform attention to visual presentation, product information, and user experience in content planning, although the survey does not test a specific marketing intervention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer evaluation and the theory of planned behavior

Consumer behavior encompasses the processes through which individuals search for information, evaluate alternatives, choose products, and assess their experiences. Kotler and Keller (2016) explain these activities in relation to the personal, social, cultural, and psychological influences surrounding purchasing decisions. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) similarly emphasize the role of consumers' motivations, perceptions, and information processing. This perspective is relevant to TikTok because promotional videos and personal product accounts provide material for evaluation before a purchase occurs. In this study, the focus is on the intention that follows these evaluations, rather than on the fulfillment of every stage in a purchasing process.

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior explains behavioral intention in relation to attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. It provides a conceptual basis for examining how beliefs and evaluations precede an intended action. Product-related content can supply information that consumers use when considering the desirability of a purchase, while user experiences can introduce social information into that consideration. The present model applies this general reasoning to content evaluations and authenticity. It does not measure the complete set of theory of planned behavior constructs, and perceived authenticity is not treated as an interchangeable measure of perceived behavioral control.

The distinction between intention and behavior is necessary for interpreting the dependent variable. Interest in a product, plans to buy it, and further information seeking indicate movement toward a possible purchase. Financial resources, product availability, and other circumstances may still affect the realization of an intention. The model consequently concerns the evaluative stage of consumer decision making. Within that stage, authenticity is examined as a potential link between what users think about content and their willingness to consider the promoted product.

AI-generated content and consumer responses

AIGC refers to content produced using generative artificial intelligence. Cao et al. (2023) describe a process in which models interpret instructions and generate material based on learned information. The technology can support different formats and reduce the effort required to produce variations of a message. From a marketing perspective, this capability is relevant to the longer relationship between information technology and marketing activities, including automation and communication (Graesch et al., 2021). However, production capability and consumer response remain analytically distinct. The present research examines how users assess the resulting content, rather than the technical accuracy or computational performance of an AI system.

The AIGC construct covers perceived realism, clarity of product information, creativity and innovation, visual attractiveness, and consistency of promotional messages. These characteristics describe what users recognize in the material they view. Clear explanations can make an offering easier to understand, and attractive presentation may draw attention to information that would otherwise be overlooked. Realism and message consistency may also reduce uncertainty about what a video is attempting to communicate. These are reasons to investigate a relationship with purchase intention. They do not establish in advance that a favorable assessment of content will be sufficient to produce an intention to buy.

The possibility of an unfavorable response must also be considered. Yang (2025) reports differences between AI-generated and human-created advertising and examines how transparency and brand reputation condition purchase intention. The relevance of this evidence is that the consequences of using AI cannot be inferred from its technical capabilities alone. In the current model, AIGC may be associated with purchase intention because of its informational and presentation qualities, but doubts about authenticity may weaken that association. A nondirectional hypothesis preserves this uncertainty: H1 proposes that AI-generated content is significantly associated with purchase intention.

User-generated content and purchase intention

UGC provides information through the accounts and experiences that users share with others. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) identify user contribution as a defining element of social media, with creative expression extending beyond established professional production. In product-related communication, this contribution can include descriptions of use, opinions about quality, and explanations of how a product performs in an everyday setting. The present UGC construct captures respondents' assessments of these contributions, including the honesty, relevance, and credibility of the information. It therefore concerns perceived content characteristics and does not classify every user account as independent of commercial interests.

User experiences may contribute to purchase intention by helping consumers evaluate alternatives that are difficult to assess directly. A product demonstration can show a use situation, and a personal account can clarify a benefit or limitation. Consumers may find such information useful when its details address their own questions. This reasoning is consistent with the information evaluation processes discussed by Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019). It also suggests why merely increasing the amount of UGC may not be sufficient. An unclear, irrelevant, or implausible account can provide little basis for a purchase decision even when it is visibly produced by another user.

The relationship should therefore be assessed empirically in the local TikTok setting. The model permits UGC to have a direct relationship with purchase intention because relevant experiences and product information may contribute to purchasing consideration. It also permits an indirect relationship through authenticity because the same material may influence judgments about the honesty of the communication. These relationships represent different statistical components of the model. H2 proposes that user-generated content is associated with purchase intention.

Perceived authenticity and the evaluation of content

Perceived authenticity is the audience's assessment of whether a message or entity appears genuine. Napoli et al. (2014) examine authenticity as a consumer-based brand construct, while Audrezet et al. (2020) analyze the difficulty of sustaining authenticity when influencer activity involves commercial partnerships. These perspectives support attention to the consumer's interpretation of communication. The administered questionnaire measured authenticity through genuineness, honesty, transparency, and message consistency. The construct describes subjective judgments about content on TikTok.

For AIGC, the proposed relationship with authenticity rests on the way technical presentation is interpreted. Realistic imagery and coherent product information may make a message appear understandable and plausible. At the same time, an audience may question a presentation that appears detached from actual use or insufficiently transparent. These competing possibilities make it useful to estimate the relationship rather than assume that automated content is necessarily inauthentic. The model asks whether respondents with more favorable evaluations of AIGC also report greater perceived authenticity. H3 therefore proposes that AI-generated content is associated with perceived authenticity.

For UGC, the proposed mechanism emphasizes the communication of recognizable product experience. Content that provides relevant detail and conveys that experience honestly may offer a basis for perceiving the message as genuine. Ren et al. (2023) show that perceived authenticity helps explain responses to different types of influencers, supporting attention to audience judgments about the person and message. This evidence does not establish that UGC and influencer content are identical, but it informs the expectation that credible personal

communication can support authenticity. H4 proposes a positive relationship between user-generated content and perceived authenticity. The expected relationship between authenticity and purchase intention concerns how confidence in a message enters product evaluation. If users consider information to be genuine and transparent, they may be more willing to use it when developing purchasing plans. If they doubt its honesty, they may remain interested in the presentation without using it as a basis for action. Loebnitz and Grunert (2022) examine the relationship of perceived brand authenticity and advertising images with purchase intentions in a food-brand setting. Together with the influencer findings of Ren et al. (2023), this research supports testing authenticity as an explanatory construct in another communication context. H5 proposes that perceived authenticity is positively associated with purchase intention.

The mediating role of perceived authenticity

The mediation model considers authenticity as an intervening assessment between content evaluations and purchase intention. AIGC may be positively evaluated for its technical presentation, but consumers may also need to regard the information as credible enough to inform a purchasing decision. Under this reasoning, AIGC relates to perceived authenticity, which in turn relates to purchase intention. The indirect relationship distinguishes this pathway from any remaining direct association between AIGC and intention. H6 proposes that perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between AI-generated content and purchase intention.

The corresponding UGC pathway begins with the experience and information communicated by users. A favorable evaluation of that content may be associated with a stronger perception of authenticity, and authenticity may then relate to purchasing consideration. Commercial pressures remain relevant because a personal presentation can still appear selective or excessively promotional, an issue raised in the authenticity analysis of Audrezet et al. (2020). The mediation hypothesis therefore does not assume that every instance of UGC is inherently authentic. H7 proposes that perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between user-generated content and purchase intention.

The conceptual model contains two exogenous constructs, one mediator, and one outcome. Both content constructs have paths to authenticity and purchase intention, while authenticity has a path to purchase intention. The two indirect relationships are evaluated through this common mediator. Figure 1 summarizes the hypothesized relationships among the four constructs. Considering both sources together permits their estimated relationships to be examined within the same model and respondent group.

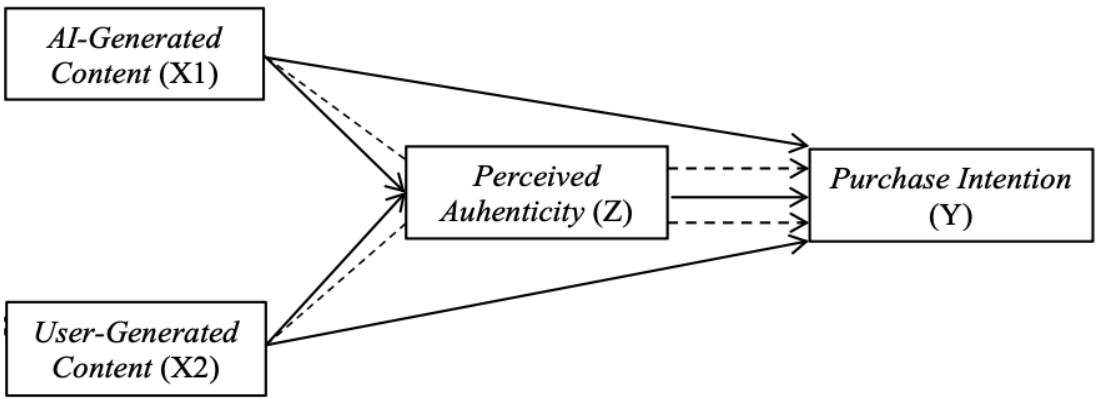


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the proposed relationships

METHOD

Research design and participant selection

The study employed a quantitative survey to examine the proposed relationships among TikTok users residing in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, Indonesia. Data consisted of respondents' self-reported assessments of AIGC, UGC, perceived authenticity, and purchase intention. The design was observational and cross-sectional. Respondents were not randomly assigned to advertisements or exposed to a standardized set of experimental materials. Instead, the questionnaire referred to product-related content they had encountered on TikTok. The individual user was the unit of analysis, and the analytical objective was to estimate relationships among the four specified constructs. The exact

number of eligible TikTok users in the city was unknown, so the study used non-probability purposive sampling. Participants had to reside in Lhokseumawe, actively use TikTok, and have seen both AI-generated and user-generated promotional content on the platform. Screening questions preceded the substantive questionnaire, and individuals who did not meet the criteria were instructed not to continue. These criteria ensured that the analyzed responses came from users with experience relevant to the research question. They did not create a probability sample of city residents or establish that all eligible users had an equal opportunity to participate. The planned sample comprised 126 respondents, calculated by multiplying the 18 initial questionnaire items by seven. This calculation describes the sampling target adopted for the study and is not a formal statistical power analysis. A total of 133 responses were received through Google Forms. Seven did not meet the eligibility criteria, leaving 126 responses for analysis. The final sample included the age categories from 15 to 60 years shown in the respondent profile. The study's results are based on this eligible sample, and the online method limits the recruitment context to users who could access and complete the questionnaire.

Questionnaire and operational measurement

The questionnaire included an introductory explanation, eligibility questions, demographic questions, and 18 substantive items. The introduction informed respondents that their answers would be used for academic purposes and treated confidentially. Demographic information covered gender, age, occupation, and monthly income or allowance. The substantive questions used a five-point Likert scale anchored by 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. Higher scores therefore indicated stronger agreement with the content evaluation or purchase-intention statement. Table 1 summarizes the administered items and identifies the items subsequently excluded from the final measurement model.

Table 1. Questionnaire items and final model retention

Construct	Code	Administered item focus	Final model
AIGC	AIGC1	Realistic content resembling human-created material	Retained
	AIGC2	Clear and understandable product information	Retained
	AIGC3	Creative and innovative presentation	Retained
	AIGC4	Attractive visuals that capture attention	Retained
	AIGC5	Consistent promotional messages	Retained
UGC	UGC1	Sharing real product-use experiences	Retained
	UGC2	Honest communication of product information	Retained
	UGC3	Information relevant to product-information needs	Retained
	UGC4	Users perceived as credible information sources	Retained
	UGC5	Comparing experiences across users before purchase	Excluded
PA	PA1	Genuine or authentic content	Retained
	PA2	Honest presentation of product information	Retained
	PA3	Open and transparent communication	Retained
	PA4	Consistent messages and product image	Excluded
PI	PI1	Interest in purchasing after viewing content	Retained
	PI2	Plans to buy products promoted through content	Retained
	PI3	Further information seeking about discovered products	Retained
	PI4	Willingness to recommend discovered products	Excluded

Note. AIGC = AI-generated content; UGC = user-generated content; PA = perceived authenticity; PI = purchase intention. Item focuses summarize the administered questionnaire. Exclusions occurred during measurement-model refinement.

Five items represented the AIGC construct. Respondents assessed whether AI-produced content appeared realistic and similar to human-created material, explained product information clearly, demonstrated creativity, attracted attention through its visuals, and conveyed promotional messages consistently. These statements concern

users' evaluations of the visible communication. They do not measure the frequency with which a respondent viewed AI content or the performance of the underlying generative model. Treating AIGC as a perception construct is consequently necessary when interpreting the path estimates: a higher score reflects a more favorable assessment of the content characteristics specified in the questionnaire.

Five items initially represented UGC. They addressed real product-use experiences, honest information, relevance to product-information needs, credibility of users as information sources, and comparison of experiences across users. Perceived authenticity initially comprised four items concerning genuineness, honesty, transparency, and consistency. Purchase intention initially comprised four items concerning interest in buying, plans to purchase, further information seeking, and willingness to recommend products discovered on TikTok. The item content makes clear that the outcome concerns purchasing consideration and related intentions. No recorded transaction value, purchase frequency, or realized sales measure was included in the model.

All four constructs were specified reflectively. An initial model containing all 18 indicators was evaluated before a refined model was estimated. The refinement removed UGC5, PA4, and PI4, leaving five AIGC indicators, four UGC indicators, three authenticity indicators, and three purchase-intention indicators. The original questionnaire summaries and the final measurement model therefore refer to different item sets. Descriptive block means summarize the items originally administered, whereas the structural relationships are estimated using the 15 retained indicators. Reporting the two stages separately preserves the meaning of both the descriptive and structural results.

Data analysis and hypothesis assessment

The analysis used partial least squares structural equation modeling in SmartPLS 4. The model includes multiple reflective constructs and both direct and indirect relationships, which can be examined within a common estimation framework. Following the general evaluation approach discussed by Hair and Alamer (2022), assessment proceeded through the measurement and structural components. Descriptive summaries first characterized the respondents and their questionnaire responses. The measurement analysis then considered indicator loadings, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Structural assessment examined explained variance, effect sizes, and the estimated relationships among the constructs.

Indicator loadings were screened against the study's adopted 0.70 criterion, and the model was re-estimated after the three indicators below that threshold were removed. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used to assess internal consistency, while average variance extracted assessed convergence. Discriminant assessment considered the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations. The evaluation distinguishes the less restrictive HTMT threshold of 0.90 from the stricter threshold of 0.85. This distinction is relevant when conceptually related constructs share evaluative language, as UGC and perceived authenticity do in the administered questionnaire.

The structural component was assessed using the coefficient of determination, adjusted explained variance, and the contribution of each predictor expressed through f^2. These results describe the explanatory properties of the specified model within the sample. Bootstrap inference was used for the path coefficients and specific indirect relationships, with a two-sided 5% significance criterion corresponding to an absolute t statistic above 1.96 and a p value below .05. Hypotheses H1 to H5 refer to the direct relationships, and H6 and H7 refer to the two indirect relationships through perceived authenticity. The direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of each estimate were considered together.

Mediation was evaluated from the estimated specific indirect relationship alongside the corresponding direct relationship. A significant indirect relationship combined with a nonsignificant direct relationship indicates the full statistical mediation pattern used in the study. Significant direct and indirect relationships in the same direction indicate a partial mediation pattern. These classifications describe the estimated model and do not establish that authenticity is the only mechanism operating in consumer behavior. Because the variables were measured in a single observational survey, the analysis cannot independently verify the temporal sequence between content evaluation, authenticity, and intention or establish an experimental treatment effect.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent profile

The survey yielded 133 responses, of which seven were excluded because they did not meet the eligibility criteria. The analysis therefore included 126 TikTok users residing in Lhokseumawe who had encountered AI-generated and user-generated content. As shown in Table 2, women accounted for 72.2% of respondents, while men

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represented 27.8%. The largest age category was 21-30 years, comprising 93 respondents or 73.8% of the sample. Students constituted 70.6%, followed by private-sector employees, entrepreneurs, and respondents with other occupations. Monthly income or allowance was below IDR 2 million for 61.1% of participants.

Table 2. Respondent characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	35	27.8
	Female	91	72.2
Age	15-20 years	7	5.6
	21-30 years	93	73.8
	31-40 years	13	10.3
	41-50 years	10	7.9
	51-60 years	3	2.4
Occupation	School or university student	89	70.6
	Private-sector employee	14	11.1
	Entrepreneur	11	8.7
	Other	12	9.5
Monthly income or allowance	Below IDR 2,000,000	77	61.1
	IDR 2,000,000-4,000,000	33	26.2
	IDR 4,000,000-7,000,000	11	8.7
	Above IDR 7,000,000	5	4.0

Source: Survey data, 2026. N = 126. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding. Income categories follow the survey classification.

The sample was concentrated among young respondents, students, and participants reporting monthly income or allowances below IDR 2 million. The estimates should therefore be interpreted primarily in relation to this participant profile.

Descriptive results

Respondents generally evaluated the four constructs favorably. The mean scores for the administered questionnaire blocks were 3.72 for AI-generated content, 3.68 for user-generated content, 3.61 for perceived authenticity, and 3.91 for purchase intention. These descriptive means summarize the complete questionnaire before measurement-model refinement. They therefore retain the original five AIGC items, five UGC items, four authenticity items, and four purchase-intention items. The structural analysis subsequently used a reduced set of indicators, as explained below. The descriptive results provide context for understanding respondents' evaluations without substituting for the estimates of relationships between constructs.

Table 3. Descriptive results for the original questionnaire blocks

Construct	Items	Block mean	Lowest item mean	Highest item mean
AIGC	5	3.72	AIGC1: 3.60	AIGC4: 3.90
UGC	5	3.68	UGC2: 3.46	UGC5: 3.88
PA	4	3.61	PA2: 3.48	PA4: 3.72
PI	4	3.91	PI2: 3.85	PI3: 4.06

Source: Survey data, 2026. Responses were scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Means describe all 18 administered items, before exclusions from the structural model.

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Within the AIGC block, visual attractiveness received the highest mean, at 3.90, followed by creativity and innovation at 3.82. Respondents thus expressed favorable assessments of the presentation characteristics of AI-produced content. In the UGC block, comparison of experiences across users obtained a mean of 3.88, whereas honesty of product information received the lowest mean, at 3.46. Honesty was also the lowest-rated authenticity item, with a mean of 3.48. This pattern suggests that attractive presentation and access to users' experiences can coexist with more reserved judgments about whether promotional information is honest. Purchase intention was most strongly expressed through seeking further product information, with a mean of 4.06. Interest in buying and plans to purchase obtained means of 3.86 and 3.85, respectively. The emphasis on information search indicates that the purchase-intention construct includes evaluative activity preceding a possible transaction. Accordingly, the relatively high purchase-intention mean should be interpreted as willingness and consideration rather than completed purchases.

Measurement quality

The initial measurement model comprised 18 reflective indicators. During model refinement, UGC5, PA4, and PI4 were removed because their initial outer loadings were 0.691, 0.699, and 0.690, respectively. The model was then re-estimated with 15 indicators: five for AIGC, four for UGC, three for perceived authenticity, and three for purchase intention. The final loadings ranged from 0.712 to 0.887, as summarized in Table 4. These results indicate that the retained indicators had substantial relationships with their assigned constructs. The final authenticity construct covered genuineness, honesty, and transparency, while purchase intention covered interest, purchase plans, and further information search.

Table 4. Final indicator loadings and construct reliability

Construct	Retained indicators and loadings	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	AVE
AIGC	AIGC1: 0.712; AIGC2: 0.738 AIGC3: 0.802; AIGC4: 0.751 AIGC5: 0.725	0.801	0.862	0.557
UGC	UGC1: 0.796; UGC2: 0.784 UGC3: 0.774; UGC4: 0.749	0.781	0.858	0.602
PA	PA1: 0.756; PA2: 0.887 PA3: 0.816	0.757	0.861	0.675
PI	PI1: 0.833; PI2: 0.878 PI3: 0.773	0.775	0.868	0.688

Source: SmartPLS 4 results, 2026. AVE = average variance extracted. The final model retained 15 indicators after removing UGC5, PA4, and PI4.

Internal consistency and convergent validity were supported by the reported statistics. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.757 to 0.801, composite reliability ranged from 0.858 to 0.868, and average variance extracted ranged from 0.557 to 0.688. Each construct exceeded the reliability threshold of 0.70 and the AVE threshold of 0.50. These results support the use of the retained measures for examining the proposed relationships. Evaluating indicator loadings, reliability, and convergent validity together follows the measurement-assessment approach discussed by Hair and Alamer (2022).

The Fornell-Larcker results showed that the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its correlations with the other constructs. The HTMT ratios in Table 5 ranged from 0.415 to 0.853. All were below 0.90, although the ratio between UGC and perceived authenticity slightly exceeded the more conservative threshold of 0.85. Discriminant validity was therefore supported under the 0.90 criterion, with greater caution warranted for this particular pair. The relatively high ratio is substantively relevant because the administered UGC items include honesty and credibility, while perceived authenticity also includes honesty. The two constructs remain analytically distinct under the adopted criterion, but the result does not justify asserting that their content is entirely unrelated.

Table 5. Construct correlations and discriminant validity

Construct	AIGC	UGC	PA	PI
AIGC	**0.746**	0.775	0.722	0.415
UGC	0.620	**0.776**	0.853	0.628
PA	0.571	0.653	**0.822**	0.702
PI	0.338	0.514	0.551	**0.829**

Source: SmartPLS 4 results, 2026. Bold diagonal values are the square roots of AVE. Values below the diagonal are construct correlations; values above it are HTMT ratios. The UGC-PA HTMT value of 0.853 is below 0.90 but slightly above 0.85.

Indicator removal narrowed the final constructs by excluding comparison of experiences, authenticity-related message consistency, and recommendation intention. Interpretation of the structural relationships follows the content represented by the retained indicators.

Structural model and explanatory results

The structural model explained 47.1% of the variance in perceived authenticity and 34.9% of the variance in purchase intention. The corresponding adjusted R^2 values were 0.462 and 0.333, respectively (Table 6). AIGC and UGC therefore accounted for a meaningful part of the variation in authenticity evaluations, while the two content constructs and authenticity jointly explained part of the variation in purchase intention. These percentages describe explanatory performance within the analyzed sample. Substantial unexplained variation remains, supporting further examination of additional consumer and product-related factors.

Table 6. Explained variance of the endogenous constructs

Endogenous construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Perceived authenticity	0.471	0.462
Purchase intention	0.349	0.333

Source: SmartPLS 4 results, 2026. These values describe explained variance within the analyzed sample.

The effect-size results were consistent with the path estimates. UGC had an f^2 of 0.275 for perceived authenticity, compared with 0.085 for AIGC. For purchase intention, f^2 was 0.128 for authenticity, 0.068 for UGC, and 0.005 for AIGC, indicating a limited direct contribution of AIGC within this model. These descriptive comparisons do not establish statistically significant differences between paths. Overall model-fit evidence was mixed. SRMR was 0.085, below the 0.10 criterion but above 0.08, while NFI was 0.711. These indices warrant caution when interpreting overall model adequacy alongside the explanatory and hypothesis-testing results.

Direct relationships

The direct-effect estimates are presented in Table 7. AIGC was positively associated with perceived authenticity, supporting H3 ($\beta = 0.270$; $t = 3.458$; $p = .001$). Respondents who evaluated AI-produced content more favorably also tended to perceive TikTok content as more genuine, honest, and transparent. A plausible interpretation is that realistic presentation, understandable information, creativity, and consistent messages provide cues that contribute to authenticity judgments.

Table 7. Direct relationships and hypothesis assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t	p	f^2	Decision
H1	AIGC → PI	−0.075	0.605	.545	0.005	Not supported
H2	UGC → PI	0.302	2.270	.023	0.068	Supported
H3	AIGC → PA	0.270	3.458	.001	0.085	Supported
H4	UGC → PA	0.486	6.264	< .001	0.275	Supported
H5	PA → PI	0.397	3.763	< .001	0.128	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 bootstrap results, 2026. β = standardized path coefficient. Decisions use a two-sided 5% significance criterion. Values displayed as .000 in the software output are reported as $p < .001$.

AIGC did not have a statistically significant direct association with purchase intention after the other modeled relationships were considered. The coefficient was −0.075, with $t = 0.605$ and $p = .545$, so H1 was not

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supported. The negative sign should not be interpreted as evidence that AIGC reduces purchase intention. Instead, the analysis did not establish a direct relationship at the specified significance level. Favorable evaluations of AI content were therefore insufficient to identify an independent direct association with purchase intention in this sample. Yang (2025) reports that responses to AIGC advertising can depend on algorithmic transparency and brand reputation. That contextual finding encourages examination of conditional responses, but it does not establish the cause of the nonsignificant relationship observed here.

UGC was positively associated with both purchase intention and perceived authenticity. The UGC-purchase-intention path supported H2 ($\beta = 0.302$; $t = 2.270$; $p = .023$), while the UGC-authenticity path supported H4 ($\beta = 0.486$; $t = 6.264$; $p < .001$). Evaluations of shared product experiences, honest information, relevance, and source credibility were therefore related to both outcomes. The results suggest that users' accounts can provide information relevant to evaluating a possible purchase while also contributing to judgments of authenticity. The lower descriptive mean for UGC honesty reinforces the distinction between encountering user content and accepting its claims without reservation.

Perceived authenticity was positively associated with purchase intention, supporting H5 ($\beta = 0.397$; $t = 3.763$; $p < .001$). Users who regarded content as more genuine, honest, and transparent also reported stronger purchase-related interest, planning, and information search. This finding is compatible with the relevance of authenticity to consumer responses identified by Loebnitz and Grunert (2022). Their work concerns food brands and advertising images, whereas the present analysis concerns users' evaluations of TikTok content. The comparison supports the broader conceptual importance of authenticity while preserving the distinct setting, measures, and design of each study.

Mediating role of perceived authenticity

Both specific indirect relationships were statistically significant (Table 8). The indirect association between AIGC and purchase intention through perceived authenticity was positive, supporting H6 ($\beta = 0.107$; $t = 2.597$; $p = .009$). Because the indirect path was significant while the direct path was not, the findings show a full statistical mediation pattern within the specified model. This pattern indicates that authenticity accounts for the supported indirect connection between favorable AIGC evaluations and purchase intention.

Table 8. Specific indirect relationships through perceived authenticity

Hypothesis	Indirect relationship	β	t	p	Mediation pattern
H6	AIGC → PA → PI	0.107	2.597	.009	Full statistical mediation
H7	UGC → PA → PI	0.193	3.049	.002	Partial mediation

Source: SmartPLS 4 bootstrap results, 2026. Both indirect hypotheses are supported. Mediation classifications describe the estimated model and do not establish causal or exclusive mechanisms.

The UGC indirect association was also positive and significant, supporting H7 ($\beta = 0.193$; $t = 3.049$; $p = .002$). Since the direct UGC-purchase-intention association remained significant, the findings indicate partial mediation. Perceived authenticity therefore represents one supported route linking UGC evaluations with purchase intention, alongside an association that remains after authenticity is included. The direct and indirect coefficients have the same positive direction. This pattern is consistent with users' experiences providing purchase-relevant information while also contributing to the perceived genuineness and honesty of promotional communication.

Ren et al. (2023) identify perceived authenticity as a mechanism in consumer responses to different influencer types. The current results extend the discussion to the simultaneous examination of AIGC and UGC evaluations in a local TikTok setting. The studies should not be treated as equivalent tests: influencer celebrity status differs from the content characteristics measured here. Their common conceptual implication is that audience judgments help explain how communication relates to purchase intention. Because the present survey measured all constructs at one point in time, its mediation estimates remain consistent with the proposed explanation without establishing temporal or causal ordering.

Theoretical implications

The findings are consistent with an evaluative account of purchase-intention formation informed by Ajzen (1991). Favorable assessments of AIGC were connected to intention through authenticity, while UGC evaluations retained both direct and indirect associations. This pattern gives perceived authenticity a specific role within the content-evaluation model and identifies a psychological assessment that merits closer examination in subsequent

consumer research. The simultaneous inclusion of AIGC and UGC also shows why content evaluation and authenticity should be examined together. Favorable AIGC evaluations had a supported indirect relationship with purchase intention, whereas UGC had supported direct and indirect relationships. This distinction clarifies the empirical role of authenticity within the specified model without establishing universal superiority of one content source. It also supports treating authenticity as an audience evaluation requiring explanation. Audrezet et al. (2020) identify tensions in maintaining authenticity when influencer communication becomes commercially involved. Their findings reinforce the relevance of examining authenticity-related judgments when interpreting promotional content, including messages presented through apparently personal experiences.

Practical implications

For businesses addressing audiences similar to this sample, the findings suggest evaluating audience perceptions of authenticity alongside visual appeal and informational clarity. AIGC can be assessed for whether product descriptions are understandable, claims are realistic, and promotional messages remain consistent with the product being offered. These recommendations follow the observed indirect relationship through authenticity. The supported UGC relationships suggest that businesses can create opportunities for customers to share concrete product experiences and explain why a product is relevant to their needs. Allowing balanced accounts can help retain the informational value represented in the UGC measures. The relatively restrained responses to honesty-related items further suggest that obtaining favorable testimonials alone may overlook an aspect that audiences evaluate more cautiously. Content assessment can therefore consider how clearly experiences, claims, and any relevant commercial involvement are communicated. These considerations provide priorities for improving the quality of product communication.

Limitations and future research

The findings are bounded by the single-city setting, purposive sampling, and the demographic concentration of the 126 respondents. Replication with larger and more diverse samples would help establish whether the relationships also occur among older users, other occupational groups, and audiences in different regions. Comparisons across Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and live-commerce platforms could examine whether similar content evaluations and authenticity judgments remain relevant under different modes of presentation and interaction.

The online self-report design also creates limitations related to respondents' interpretation, attention, recall, and participation. All constructs were measured in the same survey, and observed associations may partly reflect shared reporting conditions. No independent transaction outcome was included, and the design cannot establish whether authenticity assessments precede purchase intentions. Longitudinal observations, controlled content comparisons, and behavioral outcomes would provide stronger evidence about timing and practical consequences. Measurement refinement should also examine the content overlap between UGC and authenticity and the implications of removing the three indicators.

Future models could assess trust, electronic word of mouth, brand image, brand awareness, and perceived value. Digital literacy, trust in AI, and product category may also help explain when favorable AIGC evaluations are associated with purchasing intentions. These factors were not tested here and should remain hypotheses for further investigation. Their inclusion should be guided by clear conceptual distinctions and appropriate measurement, with additional assessment of overall model fit and predictive performance.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships of AI-generated content and user-generated content with purchase intention through perceived authenticity among 126 TikTok users in Lhokseumawe. AIGC was positively associated with perceived authenticity but did not show a significant direct association with purchase intention. UGC was positively associated with both perceived authenticity and purchase intention, while authenticity itself was positively associated with purchase intention. The specific indirect relationships for both content constructs were significant, indicating full statistical mediation for AIGC and partial mediation for UGC within the estimated model.

The findings identify perceived authenticity as a relevant consideration in explaining how users' evaluations of promotional content relate to purchase intention. They suggest attention to genuine presentation, honest information, and transparency when developing digital communication. The conclusions remain bounded by the observational design, local sample, measurement content, and mixed model-fit evidence. Further research across

audiences, platforms, and product categories can examine whether the identified relationships extend to other settings and to independently observed purchasing behavior.

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