



Innovative Strategy in Marketing *Beauty Products* Through TikTok Affiliates in Tangerang Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how TikTok affiliates in Tangerang Regency apply innovative marketing strategies and construct the meaning of beauty products through symbolic interactionism. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research reveals that affiliates rely on symbolic elements—such as facial expressions, speaking styles, trend-driven visuals, hashtags, hooks, thumbnails, and CTAs to build authenticity, strengthen personal branding, and shape audience perceptions. Audience interactions through comments and direct messages further reinforce product meaning and enhance credibility. The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of symbolic interaction in digital marketing and offer practical insights for affiliates, brands, and policymakers regarding effective strategies in the TikTok affiliate ecosystem.

Keywords: Tiktok, affiliate program, strategic marketing, personal branding

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana afiliator TikTok di Kabupaten Tangerang menerapkan strategi pemasaran kreatif dan membangun makna produk kecantikan melalui interaksionisme simbolik. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologi, penelitian menemukan bahwa afiliator memanfaatkan simbol seperti ekspresi wajah, gaya berbicara, visual berbasis tren, hashtag, hook, thumbnail, dan CTA untuk membangun keaslian, memperkuat personal branding, serta membentuk persepsi audiens. Interaksi audiens melalui komentar dan pesan langsung turut memperkokoh makna produk dan meningkatkan kredibilitas. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis terhadap kajian interaksionisme simbolik dalam pemasaran digital sekaligus menawarkan wawasan praktis bagi afiliator, brand, dan pembuat kebijakan terkait strategi efektif dalam ekosistem afiliasi TikTok.

Kata kunci: Tiktok, program afiliasi, strategi marketing, *personal branding*

1. Introduction

Unemployment is still a major problem in Indonesia, so many people face difficulties in getting permanent jobs, especially with the development of technology in the current era like this. The Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) in Tangerang Regency reached 6.94 percent in 2023 (BPS Banten, 2024). In the current era, many jobs are replaced by artificial intelligence systems such as *Artificial Intelligence*. Job opportunities are increasingly limited, so individuals start looking for ways to earn money outside the formal

sector, then the digital economy emerges as a new solution for individuals who want to make money by utilizing technology such as social media. Social media is part of a social change that is developing its existence beyond regional boundaries and is able to cross the speed of time. Social media users who continue to grow at all times have proven their existence to the younger generation to share experiences (Mahmud *et al.*, 2025).

One of the social media like TikTok in Indonesia has grown rapidly in recent years. According to Armavillia (2023), Indonesia has 112 million active accounts and is the country with the second largest number of TikTok users in the world. TikTok users spend an average of 53.8 minutes each day watching and interacting with its content (Backlinko, 2024). TikTok is superior to other social media such as Instagram and Facebook, because the TikTok application's ability to deliver content according to trends can reach a larger audience in a short time. Even though the video comes from an account with few *followers*, the *For Your Page* (FYP) feature can increase content interaction and allow the video to go viral (Sukma & Suyanto, 2023).

TikTok launched the TikTok Shop feature in 2021 in response to its increasing number of users. TikTok Shop is used for users to be able to buy and sell goods directly in the application without switching to other platforms. This is also supported by the TikTok *Affiliate* Program which is increasingly in demand by users who want to make money without having their own products, because the emergence of this feature encourages the growth of affiliate *marketing* in Indonesia. If someone buys from the yellow basket that the user includes in the video on the TikTok account, then the user who markets the product through their video will get a commission.

The number of affiliates in Indonesia has increased rapidly as a result of the emergence of TikTok Shop and affiliate programs. This program encourages many TikTok users to become affiliates, especially in the beauty category which is second only to *fashion*. According to Ahdiat, (2023), as many as 43% of TikTok users in Indonesia buy beauty category products through TikTok Shop. However, behind that, government regulations also affect the growth of the TikTok affiliate ecosystem in Indonesia. Amendments to Permendag Number 50 of 2020 explained in October 2023 prohibiting direct sales at TikTok Shops in the application with the aim of separating social media from *e-commerce* and creating a safer digital trading system. The solution found was that TikTok partnered with Tokopedia to ensure that transactions could still be made through official *e-commerce* (Erilia, 2023).

TikTok affiliate marketing requires experience and a good image for the audience in addition to selling goods. TikTok affiliates utilize the platform's algorithm to follow popular trends and expand their audience on TikTok. Mami Louise as an affiliate uses the storytelling method to create an emotional connection that drives interest and trust in the product. Mami Louise chooses cheap beauty products that have the potential to sell well, builds credibility through accurate reviews, and speaks honestly, and her position in the beauty industry is strengthened by her collaboration with well-known brands such as Purbasari. Mami Louise also uses a planned marketing strategy to take advantage of TikTok features such as the yellow basket, *trending hashtags*, and maximize audience interaction (Arvia *et al.*, 2024).

Affiliates create an image of the product that the affiliate promotes by using communication styles, facial expressions, visual effects that each affiliate creates. Effective symbolic interaction creates the perception that the promoted product has value or advantages that differentiate it from other products. Therefore, symbolic interaction influences the way consumers view and choose products (Gumilang, 2023). Another strategy is to use AIDA (*Attention, Interest, Desire, Action*). If the affiliate pays attention to attractive visuals, it will foster interest through brief but informative explanations and desires by showing the benefits of the product, and ultimately encourage potential consumers to buy through affiliate links (Risqiyanti and Mohamad, 2024).

This study will investigate how TikTok affiliates in Tangerang Regency implement their strategies in marketing beauty products on TikTok. In digital *branding research*, new perspectives will emerge from a better understanding of how social communication and symbols in terms of symbolic interactionism shape affiliate marketing strategies. Thus, this study is expected to help people who want to become affiliates to market beauty products on TikTok. In addition, this study can also be a reference for the government in making policies that regulate internet commerce and support the growth of the creative economy in Indonesia.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, which is specifically based on the research of Setiawan and Albi. This approach was chosen because its essence is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of individual experiences, namely how participants subjectively construct and interpret their reality in the context of marketing strategies on TikTok (Oluka, 2025); (Tiwari et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the phenomenological approach was chosen because it provides a deeper understanding of how TikTok affiliates actually implement marketing strategies to promote beauty brands. This means that researchers seek to understand not only what affiliates do, but also why they do it, how they feel, and how they interpret the interactions and results of their marketing efforts. To achieve this comprehensive understanding, in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation are the primary data collection methods used in this study. These three methods complement each other to capture various dimensions of the affiliates' experiences and practices.

Specifically, interviews were conducted with TikTok affiliates who were registered in the TikTok affiliate program. In this study, the participants consisted of [specific number, e.g., 5 to 8] TikTok affiliates. Participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, with strict selection criteria: they must be registered in the TikTok affiliate program for beauty products, have a minimum of [specify duration, e.g., six months] of active experience in promoting beauty products on the platform, and be willing to participate fully in the data collection process to ensure that rich and relevant data is collected (Bartholomew et al., 2021); (Bradfield et al., 2019). These interviews were designed to explore their perceptions, motivations, challenges, and internal strategies. Meanwhile, observations were conducted by carefully observing the promotional content created by affiliates. These observations included identifying the types of promotional content used (e.g., product reviews, tutorials, challenges), analyzing communication styles (e.g., formal or informal, persuasive or informative), how messages were delivered, and the dynamics of affiliates' interactions with their audiences (e.g., responses to comments or questions). These aspects were observed to understand actual practices in the field and how affiliates adapted their strategies.

As a complement, data is collected through screenshots, which are a form of visual documentation. These screenshots specifically include visual representations of the types of promotional content posted, the way messages are delivered, responses and comments from the audience, and the use of relevant hashtags. This documentation provides concrete evidence of digital marketing activities that can be analyzed to support findings from interviews and observations.

With this approach and data collection method, the objective of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of how TikTok affiliates use strategies in marketing beauty products. This includes how they build trust with followers, attract new customers through an understanding of the TikTok algorithm, identify and capitalize on ongoing trends, and use non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, body language, and speech patterns to convey messages and influence their audience. A phenomenological data analysis procedure will be applied, following steps such as data transcription, identification of meaningful statements, formulation of meaning, grouping of themes, and writing of comprehensive descriptions, to reveal the essence of the affiliates' experiences (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021). Data validation will be carried out through source triangulation, increased researcher diligence, and audit trails to ensure the credibility of the findings (Mekarisce & Jambi, n.d.).

The results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to novice affiliates as a practical reference on effective marketing strategies on TikTok social media, particularly in the context of digital branding in the beauty industry.

3. Result and Discussion

Most of the informants in this study said that their involvement in the beauty industry on TikTok was a long-standing personal interest and not a job. Even before joining the TikTok affiliate, beauty products were part of the informants' daily lives. This shows that informants are interested in the world of beauty not just as a business plan, but a *passion* that drives informants to share experiences and knowledge with their audience on TikTok. " *I have been interested in beauty for a long time, so when I saw the opportunity at*

TikTok Affiliate, I immediately tried it. In addition, the TikTok algorithm supports exposure more than other platforms. " (Interview with Setia Ningsih, February 28, 2025).

TikTok was chosen by affiliates to market beauty products, because it is considered to have a wider user reach compared to other social media platforms. According to Destiani Henindar, demand will continue to exist, because women's needs are inseparable from beauty products such as *skincare* and *makeup*. In addition, Destiani explained that consumers often look for reviews of certain items before buying, and TikTok serves as the main source of this information. Therefore, since 2022, Destiani has started marketing beauty products through TikTok affiliates. *"TikTok has a wider reach. I think promotions on TikTok get more exposure than other platforms. I first joined TikTok Affiliate in 2022. Well, that year I marketed makeup/skincare products, because I thought that as women, it must be a daily need. I feel that the development of skincare is faster, because what I know is that most people before buying skincare or makeup, definitely look for reviews of the products they are looking for on TikTok first."* (Interview with Destiani, February 25, 2025).

Creative Affiliate Content in *Beauty Product Marketing* on TikTok

Beauty product marketing on TikTok is highly dependent on the affiliate's creativity and the quality of the product being promoted. It is very important to increase audience appeal and strengthen the credibility of the video through credible sources and pay attention to references in content creation (Widiawanti *et al.* , 2023). Putri Nabila said that during collaboration with a brand, *a brief is usually given* containing basic information about the product. The delivery style is still adjusted to the character of each affiliate, but the *brief* is only used as a reference, because the information provided is not complete. According to Putri Nabila, product promotion must reflect the personality of the affiliate itself to be more authentic, although the promotional idea can refer to trends on TikTok. Meanwhile, Ranita uses a different method by looking for references from various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest. Ranita focuses more on looking for positive reviews about the content and benefits of the product to be promoted in general. By conveying in-depth and experience-based information, affiliates can build audience trust and deliver more interesting content.

The affiliates in this study used TikTok trends to increase followers and visitors to their TikTok accounts. TikTok is an algorithm-based platform, forcing content creators to be able to follow trends to increase content visibility. As a result, affiliates use their own strategies to keep the videos they produce interesting and relevant. The way affiliates increase their content to appear on *For Your Page* (FYP) is by adjusting the specified communication and visual styles to suit the current trends. Informants such as Setia Ningsih more often use *honest review techniques* by recording live sound rather than using *voice-overs*. A more authentic impression is given by the method used by Setia through this technique, because it is felt that it can increase the audience's trust in her recommendations through the promoted goods.



Figure 1. Screenshot of Product Battle Content Types based on Honest Reviews with Live Recording Technique by Setia Ningsih.

Source: TikTok Informant Account @setiangs

Putri Thalia applies a different strategy by using the *Point of View* (POV) content type in her content. With this technique, Thalia shares her personal experiences when using beauty products, so that the audience can more easily connect with the content delivered. Thalia also explained that she prefers to use viral *sound* without adding too many *stickers* or text in her videos. In one of her contents, Thalia emphasizes her habit of maintaining healthy skin by always using moisturizer before going to bed for optimal results (Interview with Putri Thalia, February 21, 2025).



Figure 2. Screenshot of the "Point Of View (POV)" Content Type by Putri Thalia.

Source: Informant TikTok Account @thallthall

Meanwhile, what Siti Sulaemah did, the strategy in promoting beauty products on TikTok was to pay attention to the content so that it was aesthetic; adding complementary tools to function as a *background* behind the promoted item and ensuring that the content uploaded on TikTok has *High Definition* (HD) resolution. Siti also not only follows the trend by using viral *sounds*, but also pays attention to the camera when taking videos directed at the product. This strategy was designed by Siti to increase interaction and maintain audience attention through attractive visual displays that are in accordance with TikTok trends (Interview with Siti Sulaemah, February 24, 2025).



Figure 3. Screenshot of Siti Sulaemah's Content Types that use Aesthetic Complementary Tools.

Source: Informant TikTok Account @ssecaa____

The Selection of TikTok for Broader Market Reach

TikTok was specifically chosen by these affiliates as the channel to market beauty products because it is perceived to have a significantly wider user reach compared to other social media platforms. According to Destiani Henindar, market demand will remain robust because women's needs are inherently linked to beauty products, such as skincare and makeup. Moreover, Destiani explained that contemporary consumers frequently search for product reviews before making a purchase, and TikTok functions as a key source for this information. Consequently, Destiani began marketing beauty products through the TikTok affiliate program starting in 2022.

"TikTok has a wider reach. I feel that promotions on TikTok get more exposure than on other platforms. I first joined the TikTok Affiliate program in 2022. That year, I focused on marketing makeup/skincare products because I believe they are a daily necessity for women. I feel the growth of skincare is faster, and what I observe is that most people definitely search for reviews of the products they are looking for on TikTok first before buying skincare or makeup." (Interview with Destiani, February 25, 2025).

Creative Content Strategies in Beauty Product Marketing

Successful beauty product marketing on TikTok heavily relies on the affiliate's creativity and the promoted product's quality. Widiawanti et al. (2023) emphasize the crucial need to enhance audience appeal and build video credibility through reliable sources and meticulous attention to content references.

Prioritizing Authenticity and Personal Character Putri Nabila shared that when collaborating with a brand, they usually receive a *brief* containing basic product information. The delivery style of the content, however, is always tailored to the unique personality of each affiliate. Although the brief is used as a reference, the information provided is often deemed incomplete. Putri Nabila stresses that product promotion must reflect the affiliate's own persona to be more authentic, even if the promotional ideas might be inspired by current TikTok trends. **Reference Gathering and Audience Trust Building** In contrast, Ranita employs a different method by seeking references from multiple platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest. Ranita concentrates on finding positive reviews concerning the general composition and benefits of the product to be promoted. By delivering in-depth, experience-based information, affiliates are able to build audience trust and produce more engaging content.

Leveraging TikTok Trends for Content Visibility

The affiliates in this study actively utilize current TikTok trends to boost their follower count and increase traffic to their accounts. As an algorithm-based platform, TikTok requires content creators to consistently adapt to trends to ensure high content visibility. Consequently, affiliates deploy their own unique strategies to keep the videos they produce engaging and relevant.

One method used by affiliates to increase the likelihood of their videos appearing on the For You Page (FYP) is by adjusting the communication and visual styles to align with current trends. Informants like Setia Ningsih frequently employ honest review techniques, recording their own voice live (*live sound*) instead of using a *voice-over*. Setia Ningsih believes that this method delivers a more authentic impression, which is key to increasing audience trust in the product recommendations she provides.

Hashtag Usage in Beauty Affiliate Content on TikTok

Affiliates on TikTok to use *hashtags* when creating video content to increase followers and engagement. *Hashtags* are a categorization tool that allows content to be categorized according to specific topics, making it easier to find by interested audiences. Including relevant *hashtags increases the chances of a video appearing on TikTok's search or recommendation page (FYP) resulting in more likes, comments, and shares*. Additionally, viral and *trending content* is often more attractive to TikTok users, especially young people who tend to follow popular trends (Irfan et al., 2024). *Hashtags* help group content so that relevant audiences find it easier (Asyari 2024).

Hashtags are used by affiliates to attract a wider audience and allow users to interact through likes, comments and shares in content. Based on the interview results, Setia Ningsih explained that using *hashtags* such as #GRWM (*Get Ready With Me*), is usually used to market beauty products in content (Interview with Setia Ningsih, February 28, 2025). *Hashtags* also make it easier for TikTok users for users looking for inspiration for makeup or self-care to find affiliate content videos. In addition, in order to stay relevant to different target audiences, Setia also changes and adds various other relevant *hashtags* according to the type of product being promoted. Thus, the observation results show that Setia got 19.4 thousand viewers from using the *hashtag*.



Figure 4. Screenshot of Hashtags Frequently Used by Setia Ningsih.
Source: TikTok Informant Account @setiangs



Figure 5. Viewers' Results of Using the Hashtag #GRWM
Source: TikTok Informant Account @setiangs

Destiani Henindar uses *hashtags* by adding the word "viral", such as #sunscreenviral. The strategy used by Destiani is seen from the tendency of TikTok audiences who are interested in popular content and trends. *Hashtags* like this increase the likelihood of videos appearing on the FYP page, increasing visibility and interaction. In addition, to stay relevant to her target audience, Destiani also changes other *hashtags* based on the products or skin types that are suitable for the content being promoted. Destiani got 51.7 thousand viewers from the hashtag.

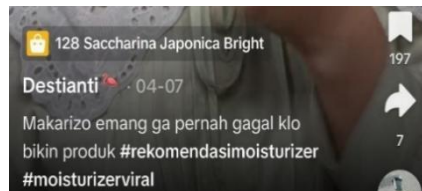


Figure 6. Screenshot of Hashtags Frequently Used by Destiani Henindar.
Source: TikTok Informant Account @destianti5



Figure 7. Results of Viewers Using Additional "Viral" Hashtags
Source: TikTok Informant Account @destianti5

Putri Nabila uses a more specific approach to choosing *hashtags* by emphasizing directly mentioning the type of product and brand. Putri Nabila's strategy is used to attract customers who are looking for information or reviews about a particular product. Putri ensures that the videos made can be seen by a relevant audience and have a special interest in the product being promoted by adding *hashtags* specifically. If Putri promotes a clay mask, it means that the *hashtag* used in her content is specifically the clay mask

from a particular brand and mentions *the hashtag* of the brand name as well. The content is presented to users with clear interests, this *hashtag method is more targeted, resulting in 47.3 thousand viewers*.



Figure 8. Screenshot of Hashtags Frequently Used by Putri Nabila.
Source: TikTok Informant Account @putrinabila2023



Figure 9. Results of Viewers Using the Hashtag Putri Nabila
Source: TikTok Informant Account @putrinabila2023

A strategy to increase the chances of TikTok videos being included in the FYP category, Siti Sulaemah uses *hashtag selection* that is oriented towards the TikTok algorithm. Siti uses popular *hashtags* like #FYP and leverages TikTok's recommendation system, which surfaces content based on trends and user engagement. Siti also added a *hashtag* with the name of a *beauty influencers* like #tasyafarasya. The purpose of the strategy carried out by Siti is to increase interaction and visibility of content so that it allows a greater opportunity for the content produced by Siti to be seen by other users on the TikTok homepage and the results of *the viewers* obtained 1,076 in Siti's content.

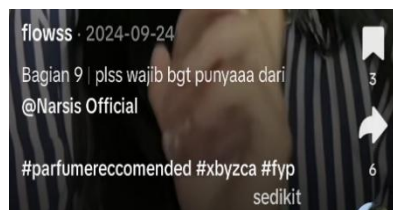


Figure 10. Screenshot of Hashtags Frequently Used by Siti.
Source: Informant TikTok Account @ssecaa_



Figure 11. Screenshot of Hashtags Frequently Used by Siti.
Source: Informant TikTok Account @ssecaa_

The results of the study show that each affiliate has their own way to maximize the use of *hashtags*, depending on the goals and marketing style applied that have been adjusted to the needs of the audience in the affiliate's TikTok account. By knowing the trends and TikTok algorithms, affiliates can optimize the use of *hashtags* in promotional content to make it more interesting. Considering the number of visitors obtained by the overall content from *the hashtags* used by affiliates in this study, it can be seen that *hashtags* that add the word "viral" are in first place, with Destiani getting 51.7 thousand visitors; second place is Putri Nabila, who gets 47.3 thousand visitors by using product-specific *hashtags* and mentioning certain brands. Therefore, the best way to increase the number of viewers on TikTok does not depend on *hashtags*; it can be achieved through other elements, such as high-quality content and affiliate communication with the audience.

Affiliate Communication Strategy in Content Creation on TikTok

Affiliates can use the "The Circular of SOME" communication model, which consists of four components: *share*, *optimize*, *manage*, and *engage*. With rich and dynamic communication, affiliates can share product information in an interesting way (*share*), optimize audience reach through TikTok trends (*optimize*), and continue to maintain follower interaction and loyalty. Therefore, various communication styles have proven effective in creating content that attracts attention and encourages audiences to buy through affiliate links (Ernanto and Hermawan, 2022).

Promotional content that attracts audience attention and increases engagement on TikTok, communication strategies also need to be considered by affiliates. Promotional content produced by affiliates needs to pay attention to a clear message delivery style strategy, and must be in accordance with *the personal branding* of each affiliate. Each affiliate has a different way of connecting with the audience so that the affiliate's experience in their content becomes more interesting and builds closer relationships. Setia Ningsih uses a direct communication method in her videos without using *dubbing* or *voice-overs*. Setia believes that communicating directly from the camera allows the audience to understand her message more clearly and creates more authentic engagement. Setia also pays attention to the use of strong hooks in the first three seconds. This is done to attract attention and make the audience watch the video until the end.

It is important to use a hook in the first three seconds to attract the audience to *stay* on the uploaded content. On TikTok, the hook is very important for content because it determines whether users will watch the video or move on to other content. A strong hook can increase audience retention, engagement, and the likelihood of content going viral (Ramanda, 2024).

Thumbnails are very important to attract the attention of the audience, create a visual identity, and ensure that the audience can distinguish the video from other content available on the platform (Nurhayati and M.Ariffudin, 2024). In this study, Setia has the ability to build a visual identity that attracts the attention of the audience to start communicating with him compared to other informants, because the thumbnail is combined with soft colors consistently at the beginning of the video. Ideal lighting in Setia's content can maintain the visual quality that makes the content more attractive and easy to follow for new followers.



Figure 12. Use of Thumbnails on Setia Ningsih's TikTok Account.

Source: TikTok Informant Account @setiangs_

Setia is able to create content that attracts attention and maintains audience interest until the end of the video by using a combination of effective communication strategies and attractive visual elements such as the use of thumbnails. This shows that the use of the right communication strategy, to successfully market beauty products on TikTok is proven by the number of *viewers* which averages tens of thousands of content on TikTok. This is supported by research by Karina *et al.* (2023), that the level of content interaction can be measured by the number of likes, comments, and shares received, is the main metric for the success of affiliate promotions. The TikTok algorithm is more likely to give visibility to videos that are watched more by the audience.

In contrast to Tiara Putri who uses two-way communication in her content by combining personal voices through live recordings from the camera and *voice-overs*. The use of *voice-overs* simplifies the editing process without eliminating the natural impression, and allows the narrative in the video to be arranged more neatly. Visual and audio components are very important for this approach, so to provide a better understanding of the contents of the video to the audience, Destiani, Tiara, Putri Nabila also pay attention to the use of thumbnails like Setia. In addition, all informants in this study used hooks in the first three seconds to attract the audience's attention and keep the audience watching the video until the end. At the end of her video, Destiani added a *Call-To-Action* (CTA) in written form as part of her marketing strategy. CTA is used to ask viewers to take certain actions, such as following an account, giving comments or buying a product (Maulana, 2024).



Figure 13. One Example of Using CTA in Text Form on Destiani's TikTok Account.

Source: Informant TikTok Account @destianti5_

Destiani makes her audience make purchases directly through TikTok's yellow cart feature to increase the likelihood of conversion from viewers to customers. Meanwhile, Ranita uses a different approach, relying more on text as the main way to communicate through content that promotes beauty products. Although Ranita does not use much *voice-over*, adding *background* as a support for video quality so that the audience does not get bored. However, visual aspects such as thumbnails and CTAs are not a top priority in Ranita's strategy, so the number of content interactions is not optimal.

The results of interviews and observations explain that each TikTok affiliate uses a communication strategy tailored to the demographics of the audience and the personal preferences of the audience to manage the affiliate's personal TikTok account. The choice of communication style such as *voice-over*, text, or direct communication on camera is part of a marketing strategy that aims to improve relationships with the audience. Affiliates can create more relevant and interesting content by changing their communication strategy to increase user engagement on their TikTok account.

Affiliates can use the "*The Circular of SOME*" communication model, which consists of four components: *share*, *optimize*, *manage*, and *engage*. With rich and dynamic communication, affiliates can share product information in an interesting way (*share*), optimize audience reach through TikTok trends (*optimize*), and continue to maintain follower interaction and loyalty. Therefore, various communication styles have proven effective in creating content that attracts attention and encourages audiences to buy through affiliate links (Ernanto and Hermawan, 2022).

Interaction with Audience in Building Product Meaning

The main metric of affiliate promotion success is the level of content engagement, as measured by the number of likes, comments, and shares received. The more viewers watch a video, the more likely the TikTok algorithm will give it more visibility. Another additional metric of success is the number of transactions generated through the yellow cart affiliate link. The more purchases made through the affiliate link, the more effective the affiliate's marketing strategy is. Thus, affiliates should also continuously check the affiliate content performance data to adjust the affiliate marketing strategy for better results (Karina *et al.*, 2023).

Satisfied customers tend to buy again, buy in larger quantities, and provide good feedback about the goods and the company. Meeting customer needs is the goal of the right marketing strategy, and brand presence is very important to differentiate products from competitors, not only through marketing communications (Nuryadi *et al.*, 2022). In order for *the influencers* who are reviewed or advertised to make the audience interested in buying related goods, brand management must choose *influencers* who often interact with their fans and followers (Audie and Permana, 2023). Therefore, the success of product promotion depends heavily on the level of good communication between affiliate content and the audience. It is very important to know the audience's interest in the promoted product through audience responses through comments, questions, or discussions after the content is uploaded. Affiliates can use audience responses to understand audience needs and plan strategies in subsequent promotional content.

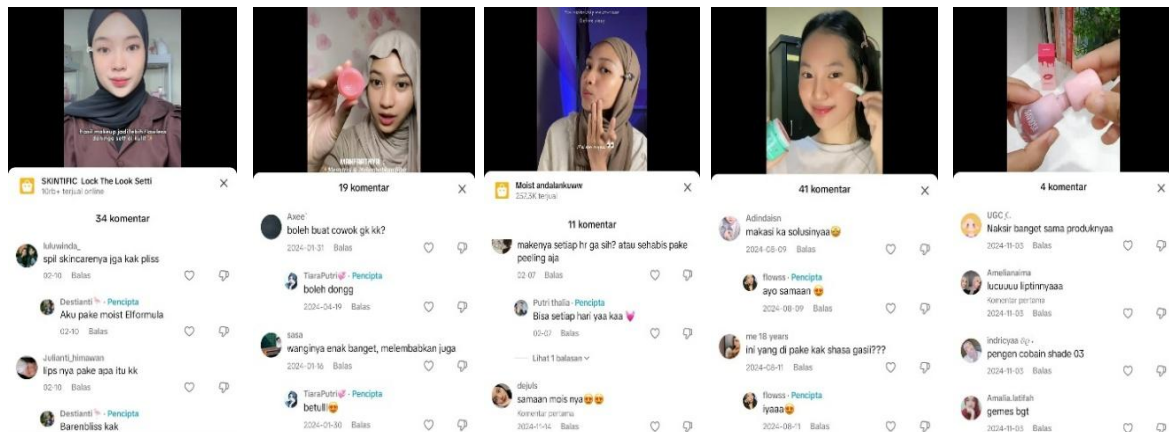


Figure 14. Screenshot of Audience Response in Comments in Affiliate Content.

Source: Informant TikTok Accounts @destianti5, @tiaraputrii77, @thallthall, @ssecas, @itsmerarr

Setia said that she often receives direct messages from interested followers via TikTok after creating beauty product review content. Audiences are usually interested in learning more about the benefits of the product, how to use it, and whether it suits their personal skin problem situations. Affiliates can build trust and relationships with their audiences through interactions like this. According to an interview with Setia on February 28, 2025, "Usually when I finish uploading content related to product reviews, many DM (Direct Message) me via TikTok DM and IG to ask about the beauty products I reviewed."

The fact that beauty products have meaning comes not only from the affiliate's experience, but also from interactions with the audience. Many audiences ask for specific recommendations or ask whether the reviewed product is suitable for certain skin conditions, which allows affiliates to understand the audience's needs and provide more personalized recommendations. In an interview with Putri Nabila on February 22, 2025, she said, "Once when I uploaded a video content, there was a pregnant woman who asked me about the dangers or not of the skincare product that I reviewed for the audience. The audience's response made me better able to increase my knowledge about the benefits of cosmetic products whether they are suitable for my audience's condition or not."

Results interviews and observations conducted by researchers show that active audience responses encourage affiliates to create additional content. This interaction helps affiliates understand the content and benefits of the promoted products. Many questions asked about beauty products indicate that affiliates are considered credible and trustworthy by the audience. Audiences feel safe consulting with trusted affiliates, because the affiliates provide clear and convincing answers.

The Relation of Symbolic Interactionism Theory

Within George Herbert Mead's theoretical framework, social interaction fundamentally shapes the meaning of something. The profound relevance of this concept in this study is that beauty products promoted by TikTok affiliates do not have a fixed intrinsic meaning, but rather their meaning is dynamically constructed through the affiliates' personal experiences and their ongoing interactions with their audience. The meaning of beauty products on TikTok becomes a social product, which is continuously negotiated and enriched through the exchange of symbols.

Mead emphasizes the role of symbols as crucial tools in social interaction that enable individuals to form and understand an object or concept. Therefore, the TikTok platform becomes an arena where affiliates actively use various symbols to promote beauty products. These symbols manifest in diverse ways: from facial expressions showing satisfaction or joy when using the product, visual content presented with a certain aesthetic or product demonstration, persuasive or convincing voice intonation, to the use of hashtags that not only function as category markers but also as symbols of community and trends. Through the use of these symbols, affiliates do not merely convey functional information about the product; they create a much more complex experience, influencing the audience's perceptions, emotions, and even identity towards the promoted product. Thus, TikTok has transformed into a primary space where affiliates continuously shape and reinforce the meaning of beauty products through a continuous and layered process of symbolic interaction.

Furthermore, Mead argues that a person's self-concept—or identity—is formed as a social reflection of interactions with others. In this context, the identity of affiliates who are successful in promoting beauty products on TikTok is formed and reinforced through proactive and responsive communication with their audience. This can be seen in how affiliates actively interact through comments, direct messages, and their readiness to respond to audience questions or feedback. The trust given by the audience to affiliates is a strong indicator of how individuals build their self-image as credible and influential affiliates through a series of repeated social interactions on the platform. The identity of affiliates, in the view of symbolic interactionism, is not something static, but rather something that continues to develop and is tested in every interaction.

In addition, the role of society or digital communities such as TikTok in the process of symbolic interactionism is greatly influenced by trends, platform algorithms, and user content consumption patterns. Affiliates who have the ability to adapt to emerging trends not only gain wider public attention more easily, but also enable the meaning of the beauty products they promote to be more readily accepted and internalized by the audience. In this context, for TikTok affiliates, beauty products are not only promotional objects, but also serve a dual function as their digital identity and as an essential marketing tool. This continuous social interaction also allows affiliates to flexibly update their branding strategies, adapting to ever-changing trends and dynamic audience responses. From a symbolic interactionism perspective, it becomes clear that the meaning of beauty products on TikTok is an ever-changing and evolving entity, personally reconstructed through affiliates' experiences and symbolic negotiations in their social interactions.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that TikTok affiliates not only act as marketing intermediaries, but also as shapers of beauty product meaning through the process of symbolic interactionism. Through the use of visual expressions, communication styles, trends, and TikTok features such as FYP and the yellow basket, affiliates are able to build credibility, increase audience engagement, and drive purchasing decisions. These findings confirm that product meaning on TikTok is formed through a combination of influencers' personal experiences and audience responses in ongoing digital interactions.

Theoretically, this study enriches our understanding of symbolic interactionism in the context of digital marketing by showing that symbols both verbal and nonverbal are important tools for influencers to build identity and influence consumer perceptions. Practically, this study provides an overview of effective strategies that affiliates can implement, such as the use of hooks, thumbnails, authentic reviews, CTAs, and visual aesthetic consistency to optimize exposure and conversion.

Reflections from this study indicate that the success of affiliates is greatly influenced by their ability to read algorithms, follow trends, and maintain active communication with their audience. However, variables such as changes in platform policies and the dynamics of content trends pose challenges that need to be continuously adapted to.

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7. Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this research.

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