

## Digital content engagement's impact on online experience mediated by trust and attitude

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**Sumar Sumar**

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**Abstract:** *In response to the growing influence of short-form video in Indonesia's digital marketing landscape, this study explores how digital content engagement on TikTok affects online customer experience (OCE), using the case of the local skincare brand Somethinc. The research investigates both direct and mediated effects of content engagement categorized into consumption, contribution, and creation OCE, with customer trust and consumer attitude as mediators. Employing a quantitative, causal-explanatory design, data were collected from 437 active TikTok users who follow @somethincofficial through an online survey. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings demonstrate that digital content engagement positively influences OCE not only directly, but also indirectly through trust and attitude. Customer trust functions as a psychological enabler that deepens the relationship between engagement and experience, while consumer attitude acts as a filter translating users' cognitive and affective responses into evaluative outcomes. The model meets the criteria for construct reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity. An  $R^2$  value of 43.5% for OCE indicates a substantial explanatory capability. These results underscore the importance of producing content that not only attracts interactions but also fosters credibility and emotional connection. Marketers should emphasize content that is informative, authentic, and visually appealing to cultivate trust and favorable attitudes, ultimately enhancing the digital journey. This study contributes to theory by embedding psychological mediators into the COBRAs framework and reinforces TikTok's strategic role in shaping comprehensive brand experiences. Future studies may expand to other platforms and methodological approaches.*

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**Keywords:** COBRAs; consumer attitude; customer trust; digital content engagement; online customer experience; skincare; social commerce; TikTok

## **Dampak keterlibatan konten digital terhadap pengalaman pelanggan daring melalui kepercayaan dan sikap**

**Abstrak:** Sebagai respons terhadap dominasi format video pendek dalam pemasaran digital Indonesia, penelitian ini mengkaji peran keterlibatan konten digital di TikTok dalam membentuk online customer experience (OCE) pada merek skincare lokal Somethinc. Tujuannya adalah mengevaluasi pengaruh langsung dan tidak langsung dari keterlibatan konten meliputi konsumsi, kontribusi, dan kreasi terhadap OCE, dengan customer trust dan consumer attitude sebagai mediator. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif dengan desain kausal-eksplanatori. Data dikumpulkan dari 437 pengguna aktif TikTok yang mengikuti akun @somethincofficial melalui survei daring, dan dianalisis menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Hasil menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan konten digital berpengaruh signifikan terhadap OCE, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung. Customer trust berperan sebagai mekanisme psikologis yang memperkuat hubungan antara interaksi konten dan pengalaman pengguna, sementara consumer attitude menerjemahkan respons kognitif-emosional menjadi evaluasi perilaku. Model ini memiliki nilai  $R^2$  sebesar 43,5%, menunjukkan kekuatan prediksi yang tinggi. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya strategi konten yang membangun kredibilitas dan resonansi emosional. Pemasar disarankan menciptakan konten yang informatif, autentik, dan menarik secara estetika untuk membentuk kepercayaan serta sikap positif konsumen. Studi ini memperkaya literatur COBRAs dengan memasukkan mediator psikologis dan menyoroti peran TikTok sebagai platform utama pembentuk pengalaman merek. Penelitian lanjutan dianjurkan mengeksplorasi platform lain dan dampak jangka panjang guna memperdalam pemahaman dinamika konsumen digital.

**Kata kunci:** COBRAs; kepercayaan konsumen; keterlibatan konten digital; pengalaman pelanggan daring; sikap konsumen; skincare; social commerce; TikTok

## **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia's digital marketing ecosystem has experienced significant growth, primarily driven by the widespread popularity of short-form video formats. As of early 2025, TikTok's advertising reach in Indonesia is projected to encompass 50.7% of the local internet user base, making the country one of the largest TikTok markets globally, with approximately 108 million active users accessible to advertisers during January-March 2025 (Kemp, 2025). Beyond functioning as an attention-grabbing platform, TikTok has evolved into a commercial channel, especially after reactivating its social commerce features through a strategic partnership with Tokopedia in January 2024. This strategic positioning has allowed TikTok to play an active role across the entire consumer journey from awareness to transaction, marking a shift in social media's role from a mere distribution channel to an integrated ecosystem that significantly influences consumer behavior (Reuters, 2024). Simultaneously, Indonesia's skincare industry is undergoing rapid expansion, with its market value expected to reach USD 3.07 billion by 2025 and projected to grow to USD 4.64 billion by 2032, at a compound annual growth rate of 6.1% (Inkwood Research, 2025). This surge is largely fueled by Gen Z and millennial consumers who are increasingly health-conscious and responsive to digital campaigns. Among both local and global brands, Somethinc has emerged as a strong competitor, leveraging aggressive digital strategies. The brand's official TikTok account, @somethincofficial, boasts 3.7 million followers and 31.6 million likes, reflecting its success in building a large audience and driving high levels of content engagement, including viewing, liking, commenting, sharing, and participating in duet or stitch features. In today's landscape, digital marketing success relies not only on reach but also on the quality of interaction between consumers and branded content.

Theoretically, consumer engagement with branded content can be analyzed through the COBRAs framework consumption, contribution, and creation (Muntinga et al., 2011). Meanwhile, online

customer experience (OCE) refers to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses that consumers exhibit while interacting with brands in digital environments. Prior studies have highlighted the unique psychological appeal of short-form videos in shaping consumer trust and purchase intention. However, there remains a scarcity of research that explicitly links digital content engagement, within the COBRAs model, to OCE in the context of TikTok and local skincare brands. Given that OCE is a critical antecedent of satisfaction, loyalty, and sustainable brand relationships, this gap presents a meaningful opportunity for scholarly inquiry (Rose et al., 2012). In addition to engagement, psychological factors such as customer trust and consumer attitude play vital roles. Trust is established when consumers perceive a brand's content to be credible, consistent, and transparent. Studies in social commerce on TikTok have found trust to significantly influence consumer satisfaction and behavior while reinforcing the link between digital interaction and customer experience (Luo et al., 2025). In Somethinc's case, it is crucial to evaluate whether the consumption and contribution of its TikTok content genuinely foster sustainable consumer trust, as high engagement alone does not guarantee positive experience outcomes.

Similarly, consumer attitude is another key construct, shaped by both cognitive (rational assessment) and affective (emotional) responses to content. Recent studies confirm that the credibility of influencers and authenticity of content on TikTok significantly influence consumer attitudes, which in turn affect brand perception, purchase intentions, and loyalty. In Somethinc's case, a positive consumer attitude toward its TikTok content not only enhances the online experience but also strengthens brand equity in an increasingly competitive skincare market (Sutrantiyas et al., 2025). Although the impact of social media on purchase intention and brand loyalty has been widely studied, few investigations have specifically addressed the relationship between digital content engagement (through consumption, contribution, and creation) and online customer experience in the local skincare industry.

Although TikTok has become a dominant platform within the skincare industry's digital ecosystem, there remains a critical gap in understanding the extent to which consumer interaction with brand content contributes to the overall quality of the online customer experience (OCE). High levels of digital content engagement, manifested through consumption, contribution, and creation, do not inherently translate into positive experiential outcomes. This discrepancy points to an important empirical issue, engagement intensity, alone may be insufficient without the presence of key psychological enablers, namely customer trust and consumer attitude. For a digitally active brand such as Somethinc, which heavily relies on TikTok to cultivate brand loyalty, it is essential to examine whether its content strategy fosters perceived credibility and attitudinal resonance. In the absence of trust and favorable attitudes, even highly interactive or viral content may fail to generate meaningful and lasting digital brand experiences. Accordingly, the present study positions itself as a response to this conceptual and practical gap by not only measuring the direct effects of content engagement but also investigating the mediating roles of trust and attitude in shaping consumer experiences within a highly competitive social commerce environment.

Moreover, research that integrates psychological mediators such as customer trust and consumer attitude into this relationship remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill these research gaps by examining the influence of digital content engagement with Somethinc's TikTok content on online customer experience, while considering customer trust and consumer attitude as mediating variables. This research seeks to enrich the understanding of consumer behavior in the era of digital marketing by exploring the psychological mechanisms through which content engagement translates into experience. Digital content engagement on TikTok has evolved from passive interaction into a more personal and emotional experience. Liu & Wang (2023) showed that interactive and informative short-form video content can enhance purchase intentions by fostering enjoyable and meaningful digital experiences. Similarly, Dinh & Lee (2024) confirmed that consumer engagement with social media content directly influences perceived quality, comfort, and satisfaction during digital interactions. Supporting this, Tiutiu et al. (2025) found that customer interaction with well-designed digital content significantly improves user satisfaction and intention to revisit, particularly when the content is immersive and aligns with consumer expectations. In the context of a local skincare brand like Somethinc, engagement with content that integrates education, testimonials, and aesthetic visuals can shape a richer and more impactful online customer experience.

H<sub>1</sub>: Digital content engagement positively influences online customer experience.

Consumer engagement with brand content on TikTok can serve as a foundation for building trust, especially when the content is perceived as authentic, transparent, and consistent. Luo et al. (2025) found that visual and narrative elements in short-form videos significantly impact trust, particularly when content communicates brand values honestly and without manipulation. Putri et al. (2023) also emphasized that trust is a key outcome of digital interactions, especially on platforms that combine entertainment and commerce such as TikTok Shop. Supporting these findings, Hipólito et al. (2025) demonstrated that consumer trust is strengthened when digital content integrates clear return policies, credible information, and consistent branding factors that reduce perceived risk and increase user confidence in online shopping experiences. In Somethinc's case, engagement with content showcasing production processes, active ingredients, and responses to consumer comments can strengthen perceptions of brand trustworthiness.

H<sub>2</sub>: Digital content engagement positively influences customer trust.

Consumer attitudes toward brands are shaped by their cognitive and emotional interpretations of the content they consume. Handranata & Kalila (2025) highlighted the importance of influencer credibility and content delivery style on TikTok in shaping positive brand attitudes. Thuy et al. (2024) added that engagement with key opinion leaders reinforces consumer attitudes, especially when the content reflects values aligned with their identities. Supporting these findings, Al-Kenane et al. (2025) found that sustained exposure to social media content significantly influences young adults' attitudes toward sustainable products, particularly when content is perceived as relevant, trustworthy, and aligned with personal values. In the context of Somethinc, content that promotes inclusive beauty, skincare education, and healthy lifestyles can foster sustained positive attitudes, particularly among Gen Z audiences who are highly responsive to social values and visual storytelling.

H<sub>3</sub>: Digital content engagement positively influences consumer attitude.

Customer trust is a fundamental factor in shaping a high-quality digital experience. Prestyasih & Hati (2025) found that trust within TikTok's social commerce context directly contributes to consumer satisfaction and comfort during brand interactions. Kumar et al. (2025) further argued that trust amplifies the impact of engagement on online customer experience, as consumers who trust a brand are more willing to explore content, provide feedback, and make repeat purchases. Supporting this, Hipólito et al. (2025) demonstrated that perceived trustworthiness significantly reduces consumer risk perception, thereby increasing satisfaction and the likelihood of future interactions in digital shopping environments. For Somethinc, trust cultivated through educational and responsive content can enrich both the affective and behavioral dimensions of consumers' digital experiences.

H<sub>4</sub>: Customer trust positively influences online customer experience.

A positive consumer attitude toward a brand is a strong predictor of a high-quality digital experience. Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2024) found that consumer attitudes toward content and influencers on TikTok directly influence loyalty and perceived experience. Yang et al. (2025) also noted that interactions, such as comments and duets, on TikTok shape brand experience and loyalty both of which are integral to the online customer experience. Supporting these findings, Ilieva et al. (2024) demonstrated that favorable attitudes formed through credible and emotionally engaging digital content enhance consumers' satisfaction and perceived value during brand interactions. In Somethinc's case, a positive attitude toward content that emphasizes education, inclusivity, and aesthetics enhances consumer perception of their interaction quality with the brand on TikTok.

H<sub>5</sub>: Consumer attitude positively influences online customer experience.

Trust is not only a result of engagement but also acts as a psychological bridge between digital interaction and customer experience. Sutrantiyas et al. (2025) demonstrated that trust mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention, indicating that trust plays a transformative role in consumer decision-making. Similarly, Kumar et al. (2025) stated that trust strengthens the connection between engagement and online customer experience, particularly for brands active in social commerce. Complementing this, Peña-García et al. (2024) found that trust in digital platforms significantly mediates the effect of review quality and content credibility on overall customer experience, especially in user-driven marketplaces. In Somethinc's case, engagement with credible and transparent content fosters trust, which in turn enhances digital experience in terms of satisfaction, comfort, and loyalty.

H<sub>6</sub>: Customer trust mediates the relationship between digital content engagement and online customer experience.

H<sub>7</sub>: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between digital content engagement and online customer experience.

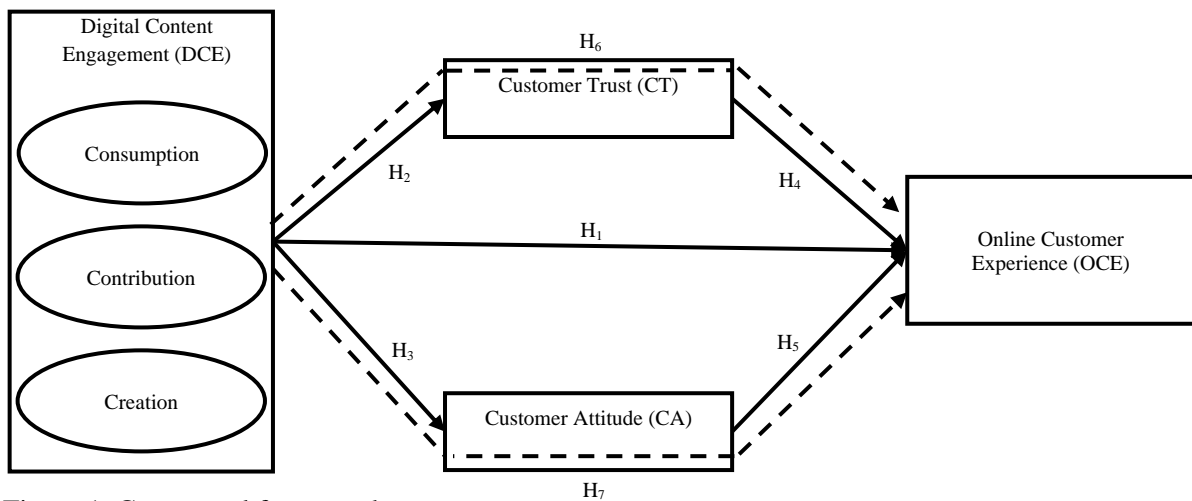


Figure 1. Conceptual framework  
Source: Processed data (2025)

## METHOD

We adopted a quantitative approach with a causal-explanatory design to examine the relationships among the variables proposed in our research model. The population in this study comprised active TikTok users in Indonesia who follow the official account of the local skincare brand Somethinc (@somethincofficial), which had approximately 3.7 million followers at the time of data collection. Using purposive sampling and the Slovin formula to determine sample size with a 5% margin of error, we obtained responses from 437 participants. While this sampling approach ensures relevance to the study's objectives, it also limits the generalizability of the findings. The focus on a single brand and platform, TikTok, means that user behavior, engagement patterns, and trust dynamics observed in this context may differ from those on other social media platforms or across different industries. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution, and future research is encouraged to include multi-platform or cross-brand comparisons to validate and extend these findings. This sample size was deemed sufficient to ensure statistical reliability and generalizability within the scope of this study. Data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google Forms.

The questionnaire was structured to measure four key constructs; they are digital content engagement (DCE), customer trust (CT), consumer attitude (CA), and online customer experience (OCE). DCE was operationalized using the COBRAs framework, which includes dimensions of consumption, contribution, and creation. CT was measured through items reflecting credibility, consistency, and transparency. CA was assessed through items that capture both cognitive and affective evaluations. OCE was measured by capturing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of consumers' digital experience with the brand. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All items were adapted and modified from previously validated instruments to fit the context of TikTok-based skincare content. Prior to full deployment, we conducted a pre-test with 30 respondents to ensure clarity and reliability. The data analysis was carried out using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method via SmartPLS software. This technique was chosen due to its robustness in analyzing complex models with multiple mediators and its ability to assess both direct and indirect effects. The testing procedure included assessments of descriptive statistics, reliability (via Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), validity (convergent and discriminant), as well as structural path coefficients. The measurement model and structural model were evaluated consecutively to ensure the robustness of the proposed hypotheses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

A total of 437 respondents participated in this study, as shown in Table 1. In terms of age distribution, the majority were between 17 and 27 years old (322 respondents or 80%), followed by those aged 28 to 35 years old (115 respondents or 20%). There were no respondents above the age of 35, indicating that the sample predominantly consists of younger individuals, consistent with the typical demographic of TikTok users and the target market of the Somethinc brand. Regarding gender, the sample was relatively balanced, with 212 male respondents (48%) and 225 female respondents (52%). This near-equal distribution allows for gender-neutral interpretation of digital engagement behavior and customer experience outcomes. In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents held a bachelor's degree (262 respondents or 60%), followed by diploma holders (147 respondents or 33.6%). A smaller proportion of respondents had completed postgraduate education (20 respondents or 4.6%), and only a few reported a high school education as their highest qualification (8 respondents or 1.8%). This indicates that the sample is largely composed of highly educated individuals, which may influence their digital literacy and responsiveness to content engagement strategies on platforms such as TikTok. Overall, the respondent profile reflects a digitally active, relatively young, and well-educated population ideal for examining the impact of digital content engagement on online customer experience in the context of a skincare brand targeting Gen Z and millennial consumers.

Table 1. Profile of the respondent (n=437)

	Description	Number of respondents	Percentage
Age	17-27 years old	322	80
	28-35 years old	115	20
Gender	Male	212	48
	Female	225	52
Educational background	High school	8	1.8
	Diploma	147	33.6
	Bachelor	262	60
	Magister	20	4.6

Source: Processed data (2025)

The descriptive statistics as shown in Table 2 indicate that the digital content engagement (DCE) variable has a mean score of 3.53 with a standard deviation of 0.60, suggesting a relatively high and stable level of consumer engagement with Somethinc's TikTok content. The online customer experience (OCE) variable has a mean of 2.29 and a standard deviation of 0.62, placing it in a moderate category with relatively homogeneous responses. Meanwhile, customer trust (CT) has a mean of 1.95 (SD = 0.54), and consumer attitude (CA) has a mean of 1.63 (SD = 0.54), both indicating relatively low to moderate levels of trust and attitude toward the brand. The relatively low standard deviations across all variables indicate limited response dispersion, suggesting that the data are consistent and representative.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (n = 437)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
DCE	2.0	5.0	3.5278	0.6030
OCE	1.0	4.2	2.2916	0.6229
CT	1.0	3.3	1.9534	0.5352
CA	1.0	3.2	1.6293	0.5387

Source: Processed data (2025)

The results of reliability and validity testing (Table 3) show that all constructs met the required thresholds. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.90 for all variables (CA = 0.943, CT = 0.955, DCE = 0.964, OCE = 0.969), indicating excellent internal consistency. All composite reliability (CR) values were above 0.95, confirming that the indicators were highly reliable in measuring the respective latent constructs. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded 0.70,

meaning that more than 70% of the indicator variance is explained by their respective constructs. In addition, all outer loadings exceeded 0.85, indicating strong correlations between indicators and their associated constructs. Overall, the measurement instrument used in this study is both valid and reliable.

Table 3. Validity and reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	CR	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CA	0.943	0.945	0.954	0.777
CT	0.955	0.955	0.962	0.736
DCE	0.964	0.964	0.969	0.775
OCE	0.969	0.969	0.973	0.802

Source: Processed data (2025)

Discriminant validity was assessed using cross-loading analysis, which confirmed that each indicator loaded highest on its respective construct compared to others. For example, indicators CA1-CA6 exhibited the highest loadings on consumer attitude (CA) (ranging from 0.86 to 0.89) and substantially lower values on CT, DCE, and OCE. Among these, CA5, with the highest loading value (0.89), captures respondents' positive emotional evaluation toward Somethinc's TikTok content, reflecting the extent to which they perceive such content as enjoyable, relevant, and aesthetically appealing. A similar pattern was found across other constructs. Within customer trust (CT), CT4 demonstrated the strongest loading (0.86), representing consumers' confidence in the brand's transparency and credibility in communicating product-related information. For digital content engagement (DCE), DCE6 emerged as the most influential item (0.90), indicating the degree of users' active participation through likes, comments, and shares on Somethinc's TikTok posts. Meanwhile, OCE9 recorded the highest loading (0.91) in the online customer experience construct, signifying consumers' overall satisfaction and emotional connection following digital interactions with the brand. Collectively, these findings confirm that the constructs are empirically distinct and theoretically coherent, with their strongest indicators effectively representing the core dimensions of engagement, trust, attitude, and experience.

Table 4. Cross-loading

	CA	CT	DCE	OCE
CA1	0.863			
CA2	0.886			
CA3	0.884			
CA4	0.884			
CA5	0.888			
CA6	0.883			
CT1		0.874		
CT2		0.851		
CT3		0.859		
CT4		0.861		
CT5		0.846		
CT6		0.843		
CT7		0.866		
CT8		0.858		
CT9		0.862		
DCE1			0.888	
DCE2			0.871	
DCE3			0.874	
DCE4			0.891	
DCE5			0.882	
DCE6			0.896	
DCE7			0.874	
DCE8			0.881	

DCE9	0.865
OCE1	0.882
OCE2	0.894
OCE3	0.896
OCE4	0.899
OCE5	0.886
OCE6	0.898
OCE7	0.898
OCE8	0.895
OCE9	0.911

Source: Processed data (2025)

Table 5. Hypothesis direct effect

Hypothesis	Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Conclusion
H <sub>1</sub>	DCE → OCE	0.431	0.433	0.031	14.012	0.000	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub>	DCE → CT	0.514	0.516	0.036	14.330	0.000	Accepted
H <sub>3</sub>	DCE → CA	0.453	0.455	0.037	12.386	0.000	Accepted
H <sub>4</sub>	CT → OCE	0.384	0.385	0.034	11.254	0.000	Accepted
H <sub>5</sub>	CA → OCE	0.447	0.447	0.035	12.783	0.000	Accepted

Source: Processed data (2025)

The first hypothesis tests the direct effect of digital content engagement on online customer experience. The analysis results show a coefficient of 0.431, with a t-statistic of 14.012 and a p-value of 0.000. Since this path is significant, the hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that consumer engagement with digital content contributes to an overall improvement in the online customer experience.

The second hypothesis tests the direct effect of digital content engagement on customer trust. The path coefficient is 0.514, with a t-statistic of 14.330 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant and positive relationship. Therefore, H<sub>2</sub> is supported. This result suggests that higher engagement with digital content leads to greater consumer trust in the brand.

The third hypothesis tests the direct effect of digital content engagement on consumer attitude. The path coefficient is 0.453, with a t-statistic of 12.386 and a p-value of 0.000, supporting H<sub>3</sub>. This implies that digital engagement significantly contributes to shaping a positive consumer attitude toward the brand.

The fourth hypothesis tests the direct effect of customer trust on online customer experience. The path coefficient is 0.384, with a t-statistic of 11.254 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming H<sub>4</sub>. This result demonstrates that higher levels of trust enhance consumers' overall online experience with the brand.

The fifth hypothesis tests the direct effect of customer attitude on online customer experience. The path coefficient is 0.447, with a t-statistic of 12.783 and a p-value of 0.000, thereby accepting H<sub>5</sub>. This indicates that a more positive consumer attitude significantly improves online customer experience.

Table 6. Hypothesis indirect effect

Hypothesis	Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Conclusion
H <sub>6</sub>	DCE → CT → OCE	0.211	0.212	0.027	7.720	0.000	Accepted
H <sub>7</sub>	DCE → CA → OCE	0.220	0.221	0.028	7.787	0.000	Accepted

Source: Processed data (2025)

The sixth hypothesis tests the indirect effect of digital content engagement on online customer experience through customer trust as a mediating variable. The mediation path shows a coefficient of



0.211, with a t-statistic of 7.720 and a p-value of 0.000. Because the test results are significant, this hypothesis is accepted. Thus, customer trust acts as a mediator that strengthens the influence of digital engagement on customer experience.

The seventh hypothesis tests the indirect effect of digital content engagement on online customer experience through consumer attitude as a mediating variable. The analysis yielded a path coefficient of 0.220, with a t-statistic of 7.787 and a p-value of 0.000. This result is significant, so the hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that consumer attitude effectively mediates the causal relationship between digital content engagement and online customer experience.

The R-square value (Table 7) shows that the CA construct is explained by 20.6% by the independent variables, CT by 26.5%, and OCE by 43.5%. The R<sup>2</sup> value for OCE is in the moderate to strong category, indicating that variations in online customer experience can be explained quite well by DCE, CT, and CA. Meanwhile, the R<sup>2</sup> values for CT and CA are in the range of 0.20–0.26, indicating that most of the variance is indeed influenced by DCE, but there are still other factors outside this model that have the potential to influence. Overall, this R<sup>2</sup> value confirms that the research model has quite good predictive ability, especially for the OCE variable as the main variable.

Table 7. R-Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
CA	0.206	0.204
CT	0.265	0.263
OCE	0.435	0.432

Source: Processed data (2025)

### Discussion

The total effect analysis revealed that digital content engagement (DCE) has a significant positive influence on online customer experience (OCE) ( $\beta = 0.431$ ;  $t = 14.012$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This total effect represents the combined direct and indirect influence of DCE through customer trust and consumer attitude, emphasizing its central role as a determinant of digital experience quality. When linked to the respondent profile, the majority of participants were aged 17–27 years (80%), a demographic group recognized for high digital literacy and active engagement in visual and interactive content on TikTok. This finding suggests that younger consumers, who dominate the platform, are particularly responsive to immersive, authentic, and emotionally resonant digital content. At the construct level, DCE6, which measures users' active participation through likes, comments, and shares, recorded the highest loading (0.90) and a mean score of 4.47, indicating a strong behavioral involvement with Somethinc's TikTok content. For OCE, OCE9, representing consumers' overall satisfaction and emotional connection after interacting with the brand, exhibited the highest loading (0.91) and a mean of 4.52, signifying that respondents experienced high levels of enjoyment, comfort, and perceived value during their digital interactions. These findings are consistent with prior empirical research emphasizing the role of engagement in enhancing digital experiences. Liu & Wang (2023) demonstrated that interactive and informative content significantly improves consumers' perceived enjoyment and digital satisfaction. Dinh & Lee (2024) found that engagement with social media content enhances perceived quality, comfort, and satisfaction during online interactions. Tiutiu et al. (2025), further, confirmed that user participation and online service design are critical determinants of satisfaction and loyalty in digital environments. Building on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, Shen & Wang (2024) explained that content alignment and persona congruence stimulate cognitive and emotional responses, ultimately shaping online experiences. In Somethinc's context, these theoretical insights manifest through strategically curated TikTok content that combines episodic storytelling, educational entertainment (edutainment), and responsive community interaction. Such strategies foster a sense of involvement, authenticity, and perceived control key components of a high-quality online customer experience.

The results indicate that digital content engagement (DCE) has a strong and significant positive effect on customer trust (CT) ( $\beta = 0.514$ ;  $t = 14.330$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), making this the strongest direct path in the structural model. This finding suggests that deeper and more frequent engagement with Somethinc's TikTok content substantially enhances consumers' confidence in the brand's credibility, transparency,

and benevolence. The relationship between DCE and CT is closely aligned with the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of participants were aged 17-27 years (80%), representing the generation most exposed to digital media and social commerce ecosystems. Younger consumers are particularly sensitive to authenticity cues and are more likely to form trust through repeated exposure to credible and visually engaging short-form content. This age group also values interactivity and transparency factors that play a pivotal role in translating engagement behavior into perceived brand reliability. The dominance of this demographic explains why Somethinc's TikTok strategy, which emphasizes relatable storytelling and transparent messaging, effectively builds trust among its followers. Within the DCE construct, DCE6 representing users' active participation through likes, comments, and shares recorded the highest loading (0.90) and a mean score of 4.47, highlighting the behavioral aspect of engagement as the primary trust-building mechanism. Repeated interactions signal social proof and perceived authenticity, reinforcing brand credibility. For the CT construct, CT4, which reflects consumers' belief in the brand's transparency and honesty in product communication, achieved the highest loading (0.86) and a mean score of 4.49, confirming that consumers interpret transparent and informative content as trustworthy. This suggests that clarity in communicating product claims, ingredient disclosures, and lab testing results is a critical factor in cultivating trust. These results align with a growing body of literature emphasizing the role of content quality and perceived integrity in developing consumer trust. Luo et al. (2025) confirmed that attributes, such as usefulness, ease of use, and entertainment, in short-form video content significantly enhance trust and behavioral engagement. Similarly, Putri et al. (2023) found that authentic and transparent short videos foster strong brand trust in social commerce contexts by reducing perceived risk and strengthening credibility. Extending these insights, Yang et al. (2025) highlighted that a balanced combination of verified user-generated content (UGC) and consistent firm-generated content (FGC) effectively bridges the "trust gap" on social platforms. In Somethinc's context, content that integrates trust signals such as claim clarity, process transparency, and responsive communication creates a credible and reliable digital presence. This strategic orchestration of DCE not only enhances consumers' perceptions of integrity but also sustains long-term confidence in the brand.

The empirical findings reveal that digital content engagement (DCE) has a significant positive effect on consumer attitude (CA) ( $\beta = 0.453$ ;  $t = 12.386$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This result confirms that consumers who actively interact with Somethinc's TikTok content through watching, liking, commenting, sharing, or creating duets develop more favorable evaluations of both the brand and its digital presence. Intense engagement activities foster a sense of ownership and participation, leading to stronger emotional and cognitive attachment toward the content and the brand. The respondent profile provides further insight into this relationship. The majority of participants were young consumers aged 17-27 years (80%), an audience segment known for their strong affinity toward interactive and visual digital media. This demographic tends to evaluate brands not solely based on product attributes but also on the quality of content experiences and their alignment with personal values. As digitally native users, they seek authenticity, entertainment, and relevance elements that directly shape their attitudes toward brands. The predominance of this age group suggests that Somethinc's use of TikTok as a storytelling platform effectively resonates with the motivations and consumption habits of Gen Z audiences. At the construct level, DCE6, which captures active user participation through likes, comments, and shares, exhibited the highest loading (0.90) and a mean score of 4.47, emphasizing that active involvement is a crucial factor in shaping consumer evaluations. Repeated interaction not only sustains attention but also promotes identification with the brand community. Within the CA construct, CA5, reflecting positive emotional evaluation toward Somethinc's content, demonstrated the highest loading (0.89) and a mean score of 4.50. This indicates that emotional resonance derived from TikTok's educational and aesthetic content significantly strengthens favorable brand attitudes. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the psychological mechanisms linking engagement and attitude formation. Pang et al. (2024) identified that social media interactivity generates a sense of involvement and belonging, reinforcing positive attitudes toward the platform and brand. Shen & Wang (2024) further argued that content that is both informative and entertaining accelerates the development of positive attitudes by enhancing perceived content quality and enjoyment. In the beauty sector, Yang et al. (2025) highlighted that exposure to visually appealing and informative content, such as ingredient explanations or before-after transformations, shapes cognitive and emotional appraisals in a favorable direction. Complementary studies by Handranata & Kalila (2025) and Thuy et al. (2024) similarly confirmed that

influencer credibility and delivery style on TikTok significantly strengthen consumers' positive brand attitudes. In the case of Somethinc, these theoretical insights are reflected in its creative strategy that integrates educational tutorials, inclusive beauty messaging, and curated user-generated content (UGC). Such content effectively aligns with users' values and social identities, thereby reinforcing the DCE-CA pathway. This alignment not only enhances brand appeal but also establishes attitudinal foundations that facilitate deeper engagement and sustained customer experience.

The results confirm that customer trust (CT) has a significant positive effect on online customer experience (OCE) ( $\beta = 0.384$ ;  $t = 11.254$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding indicates that consumers who trust the brand are more likely to perceive their digital journey as seamless, comfortable, and satisfying. Theoretically, trust minimizes perceived risk and enhances a sense of security, thereby shaping a more positive and enduring digital experience. The relationship between trust and online experience is consistent with the behavioral tendencies of the study's respondents, the majority of whom were aged 17-27 years (80%). This demographic group is highly active in digital environments and places great importance on transparency, ethical behavior, and responsiveness from brands. Young consumers tend to equate trustworthiness with reliability and openness; thus, when they perceive honest communication and responsive customer service, their satisfaction and emotional connection increase. The fact that this group engages frequently with social commerce content also amplifies the role of trust as a central determinant of a positive online experience. At the construct level, CT4, representing consumers' confidence in the brand's transparency and honesty in communicating product-related information, exhibited the highest loading (0.86) with a mean score of 4.49. This suggests that Somethinc's ability to disclose accurate product details and respond promptly to customer feedback strongly contributes to trust formation. Within the OCE construct, OCE9, reflecting overall satisfaction and emotional connection during interaction with the brand, recorded the highest loading (0.91) and a mean score of 4.52, highlighting that trust-based interactions directly translate into enriched experiential outcomes. This finding aligns with prior research asserting that trust is a key antecedent of satisfaction and perceived experience quality in digital settings. Hipólito et al. (2025) found that consumer trust, strengthened by credible return policies, transparent information, and reliable reviews, enhances satisfaction while reducing uncertainty in online transactions. Prestyasih & Hati (2025) similarly demonstrated that trust within TikTok's social commerce ecosystem directly contributes to comfort and satisfaction during brand interactions. Furthermore, Kumar et al. (2025) highlighted that trust amplifies the positive impact of engagement on customer experience by encouraging exploratory behavior and feedback participation. These findings are also consistent with Tiutiu et al. (2025), who observed that consumers with high trust are more forgiving of minor service frictions and tend to evaluate their digital interactions as repeatable and rewarding. In Somethinc's context, building and maintaining trust depends on optimizing online service design particularly through ethical content practices, responsive communication, transparent policies, and aesthetic consistency. Integrating credible signals such as product certifications, verified testimonials, and lab-based validation further enhances perceived reliability. From a managerial standpoint, such trust-driven engagement not only elevates online customer experience but also fosters loyalty and advocacy within competitive social commerce environments.

The results show that consumer attitude (CA) has a significant and positive effect on online customer experience (OCE) ( $\beta = 0.447$ ;  $t = 12.783$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that attitude serves as a critical antecedent to digital experience quality. This finding confirms that consumers, who hold favorable cognitive and affective evaluations of Somethinc's content and brand, are more likely to interpret their online interactions as enjoyable, useful, and meaningful, resulting in an enhanced digital experience. The strength of this relationship is particularly evident when considering the respondent profile. The majority of participants were aged 17-27 years (80%), a cohort that exhibits high emotional receptivity to digital storytelling and visual aesthetics. This generation's engagement patterns are often shaped by authenticity, social relevance, and entertainment value, all factors that influence attitude formation on platforms such as TikTok. Gen Z and younger millennials tend to associate positive emotions with brands that communicate inclusivity, education, and creativity, suggesting that Somethinc's content strategy effectively resonates with their digital preferences. Consequently, these attitudinal orientations translate into more positive evaluations of online experiences. At the construct level, CA5, which captures positive emotional evaluation toward Somethinc's TikTok content, demonstrated the highest loading (0.89) and a mean score of 4.50, signifying that emotional resonance and content relevance are

the strongest determinants of favorable attitudes. Within the OCE construct, OCE9, representing consumers' overall satisfaction and emotional connection after digital interaction, achieved the highest loading (0.91) with a mean score of 4.52. These results collectively indicate that users with stronger emotional and cognitive alignment with brand content perceive their experiences as more enjoyable, seamless, and satisfying. Conceptually, when consumers hold positive cognitive and affective evaluations toward digital content, they experience heightened satisfaction and perceive online interactions as valuable and enjoyable. This is consistent with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, where attitude functions as the internal "organism" that mediates between external content stimuli and experiential outcomes. Tiutiu et al. (2025) demonstrated that perceptions and attitudes derived from short-form video exposure directly influence user satisfaction and behavioral intention. Similarly, Shen & Wang (2024) found that favorable attitudes enhance perceived interaction quality comfort, enjoyment, and repeatability leading to superior digital experiences. Further, Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2024) and Yang et al. (2025) established that positive attitudes toward TikTok content significantly improve brand experience and customer loyalty, both of which are integral dimensions of OCE. In the beauty sector, aesthetically curated and informative content, such as ingredient education, product demonstrations, and narrative storytelling, has been shown to elevate perceived product quality and refine experiential perception (Tiutiu et al., 2025).

The mediation analysis indicates that customer trust (CT) significantly mediates the relationship between digital content engagement (DCE) and online customer experience (OCE) ( $\beta = 0.211$ ;  $t = 7.720$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This result suggests that part of the influence of DCE on OCE operates indirectly through the development of trust. In other words, engaging digital content enhances consumers' perceptions of credibility and reliability, which subsequently reduces uncertainty and increases satisfaction leading to a more positive overall experience. This mediating relationship can be better understood through the characteristics of the study's participants. The majority of respondents were aged 17-27 years (80%), representing a digitally literate audience that actively engages with social commerce content and is highly responsive to authenticity and transparency cues. Younger consumers often use credibility markers such as verified labels, customer testimonials, and brand responsiveness as trust-building mechanisms. Consequently, their perceived trust in Somethinc's TikTok content translates directly into higher satisfaction and comfort during digital interactions, reinforcing the mediating effect of trust between engagement and experience. At the construct level, DCE6, which measures users' active participation through likes, comments, and shares, recorded the highest loading (0.90) and a mean score of 4.47, confirming that behavioral engagement is a key stimulus for trust development. Within the CT construct, CT4, representing confidence in the brand's transparency and honesty, showed the highest loading (0.86) and a mean of 4.49, indicating that transparent communication acts as the psychological mechanism linking engagement to trust. Similarly, OCE9, denoting satisfaction and emotional connection, achieved the highest loading (0.91) and a mean of 4.52, confirming that trust translates directly into improved experiential outcomes. The mediating role of trust aligns with established theoretical frameworks and prior empirical studies. Luo et al. (2025) demonstrated that trust mediates the relationship between content attributes, such as usefulness, clarity, and entertainment, and consumer behavioral responses in short-form video environments. Peña-García et al. (2024) further identified that trust in digital platforms and review systems significantly enhances user experience and mediates the link between information quality and consumer evaluation. Similarly, Hipólito et al. (2025) highlighted that credibility and perceived safety within online channels strengthen satisfaction by reducing perceived risk. Complementary findings by Sutrantiyas et al. (2025) and Kumar et al. (2025) corroborate that trust acts as a critical psychological bridge between digital engagement and customer experience in social commerce contexts.

The findings confirm that consumer attitude (CA) significantly mediates the relationship between digital content engagement (DCE) and online customer experience (OCE) ( $\beta = 0.220$ ;  $t = 7.787$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This result indicates that digital engagement stimulates the formation of positive attitudes toward the brand, which subsequently enhances the quality of consumers' online experiences. Theoretically, engagement serves as an external stimulus that triggers cognitive and affective evaluations, leading to more favorable interpretations of brand-related interactions. The mediating effect of consumer attitude aligns closely with the characteristics of the study's respondents. The majority were young TikTok users aged 17-27 years (80%), representing an audience segment that values creativity, authenticity, and emotional resonance in digital communication. This demographic tends to form attitudes based not only

on information quality but also on alignment with personal values and aesthetic appeal. Their heightened emotional responsiveness to visual storytelling and educational entertainment (edutainment) explains why repeated engagement with Somethinc's content fosters stronger attitudinal attachment, which in turn enhances their online customer experience. Within the DCE construct, DCE6, reflecting active participation through likes, comments, and shares, exhibited the highest loading (0.90) and a mean score of 4.47, reinforcing the role of behavioral engagement in attitude formation. For consumer attitude, CA5, which captures positive emotional evaluation toward Somethinc's content, recorded the highest loading (0.89) with a mean score of 4.50, confirming that emotional enjoyment and perceived relevance are key precursors of favorable attitudes. In the OCE construct, OCE9, representing overall satisfaction and emotional connection, showed the highest loading (0.91) and a mean of 4.52, illustrating that positive attitudes directly translate into enhanced experiential quality. These results are consistent with recent studies highlighting the mediating role of attitude in digital environments. Shen & Wang (2024) demonstrated that consumer attitudes act as a psychological chain linking content perceptions such as informativeness, entertainment value, and persona alignment to online experience and behavioral intention. Similarly, Ilieva et al. (2024) found that the cognitive-affective pathway (e.g., perceived usefulness → attitude → intention) serves as a central mechanism through which engagement translates into experience and action. Al-Kenane et al. (2025) further emphasized that favorable attitudes developed through credible, value-driven content, enhance satisfaction and sustainable consumer engagement, particularly among young adults exposed to social media marketing. Moreover, Soekotjo et al. (2025) confirmed that attitudes toward digital content mediate the relationship between engagement and both brand experience and purchase intention in digital marketing contexts.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study highlights the critical role of digital content engagement on TikTok in shaping online customer experience (OCE), particularly within the context of the local skincare brand Somethinc. The findings demonstrate that consumer interaction with digital content, whether through passive consumption, active contribution, or creative participation, exerts a meaningful and multifaceted influence on how customers perceive and experience brands in digital environments. Importantly, this influence operates not only through direct pathways but also indirectly through two key psychological mechanisms, customer trust and consumer attitude. Digital content engagement enhances trust when users perceive the content as credible, transparent, and consistent, thereby reducing uncertainty and reinforcing perceptions of integrity. At the same time, engagement cultivates positive consumer attitudes through emotionally resonant, informative, and aesthetically appealing content, which make consumers interpret digital interactions as enjoyable, useful, and personally meaningful. Together, these mediators act as cognitive-affective bridges that convert engagement into deeper, more enduring brand relationships. Theoretically, these results advance the integration of the COBRAs, social commerce, and online experience frameworks by revealing how psychological dimensions translate interaction into experiential and relational value.

From a managerial standpoint, the study provides several operational implications for digital marketing and content strategy. Brands should focus on building credibility through transparent communication, verified claims, and authentic testimonials to reinforce consumer trust. Equally important, content should balance educational and emotional elements, such as tutorials, ingredient explanations, and brand storytelling, to strengthen consumer attitudes and perceived relevance. Managers are encouraged to implement responsive interaction systems, including comment moderation, customer feedback loops, and quick response features, to enhance comfort and reliability during digital engagement. Leveraging data analytics to personalize content while maintaining authenticity can ensure that engagement efforts lead to meaningful experiential outcomes rather than superficial attention. Additionally, collaboration with influencers should prioritize credibility and audience fit over mere popularity to sustain trust and authenticity in brand-consumer relationships. When operationalized effectively, these strategies can transform digital engagement metrics, likes, comments, and shares, into tangible improvements in satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy.

Despite its contributions, the scope of this study should be interpreted within its empirical boundaries. The research focused exclusively on a single brand and platform using a cross-sectional

design and a sample dominated by young, educated TikTok users. As such, caution must be exercised when generalizing these findings to other industries, demographic groups, or digital ecosystems. Future research should adopt a comparative, cross-platform approach by examining whether similar mechanisms apply in other digital spaces such as Instagram, YouTube, or X (Twitter), where audience behavior and algorithmic engagement patterns differ. Longitudinal designs could also capture the temporal evolution of engagement, trust, and attitude, offering insight into how these variables influence long-term loyalty and brand attachment. Furthermore, exploring the role of influencer marketing on TikTok, particularly among micro- and nano-influencers, would provide a richer understanding of how credibility, parasocial relationships, and perceived expertise shape consumer evaluations. Complementary qualitative or mixed-method approaches, including ethnography or in-depth interviews, could further illuminate the emotional and symbolic aspects of digital engagement that are often overlooked in quantitative designs. Together, these directions would expand theoretical and practical understanding of how engagement-driven content strategies shape sustainable online customer experiences across digital ecosystems.

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