

# Value-Building Rather Than Risk-Reduction? Effects of TikTok Beauty Recommendation Videos on College Students' Purchase Decisions

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**Abstract:** TikTok-style short-form video platforms have become an important channel for beauty product discovery and social commerce among young consumers. However, existing studies have mainly examined general video attributes such as informativeness, entertainment, and trust, while paying less attention to beauty-specific content characteristics and the comparative roles of perceived value and perceived risk. This study examines how three content characteristics of TikTok beauty recommendation videos - professionalism, authenticity, and practicality - influence college students' purchase decisions. Drawing on the stimulus-organism-response framework, the study argues that these content characteristics affect purchase decisions through perceived value and perceived risk, while consumption values may further shape these relationships. A questionnaire survey was conducted among Chinese college students who had watched beauty recommendation videos on Douyin, the Chinese counterpart of TikTok, and the data were analyzed using reliability and validity tests, correlation analysis, regression analysis, mediation analysis, and exploratory moderation analysis. The findings show that professionalism, authenticity, and practicality all positively influence purchase decisions. Perceived value plays a significant mediating role, whereas perceived risk does not show a significant mediating effect. Additional analysis indicates that hedonic consumption values strengthen the effect of professionalism on perceived value but weaken the effect of authenticity on perceived value. The study contributes to short-form video marketing research by refining beauty-related content characteristics and by showing that value-building is a more important mechanism than risk-reduction in this social commerce context.

**Keywords:** TikTok; Douyin; Beauty Recommendation Videos; Content Characteristics; Perceived Value; Perceived Risk; Purchase Decision

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## 1. Introduction

Social media marketing has evolved from static brand communication to highly interactive, creator-centered, and video-based persuasion. Among emerging formats, short-form video has become especially influential because it combines visual demonstration, emotional appeal, algorithmic distribution, and social interaction in a single environment. In beauty consumption, such features are particularly important. Consumers often rely on creators' demonstrations, product comparisons, and usage experiences to evaluate whether a product is worth buying. As a result, TikTok and its Chinese

counterpart Douyin have become major channels through which young consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase beauty products<sup>[1]</sup>.

Prior research has shown that influencer marketing can significantly shape consumer attitudes, trust formation, and purchase-related intentions. Lou and Yuan found that informative value and source credibility in influencer content enhance trust in branded social media posts, which then improves brand awareness and purchase intention<sup>[1]</sup>. Liu and Zheng further showed that informativeness, authenticity, and homophily strengthen parasocial relationships, which in turn increase brand credibility and purchase intention<sup>[2]</sup>. In the beauty domain, influencer credibility appears especially important. Garg and Bakshi reported that beauty vloggers' trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness build follower trust and increase purchase intention, with trust acting as a partial mediator<sup>[3]</sup>. These findings suggest that beauty-related social media persuasion depends not only on exposure, but also on how consumers interpret the quality and credibility of content.

Recent studies on short-form video marketing have extended this line of inquiry to platform-based social commerce contexts. Luo et al. demonstrated that content features such as usefulness, ease of use, and entertainment value increase consumer trust and perceived value on short-video platforms, which then promote purchase intention<sup>[4]</sup>. Shen and Wang showed that users' perceptions of creators' personas affect purchase intention through shared value creation in short-video social commerce<sup>[5]</sup>. Zheng found that flow experience significantly increases participative and sharing behavior on Douyin, indicating that immersive engagement is an important psychological mechanism in short-video use<sup>[6]</sup>. A recent review confirmed that research on social media influencers and purchase intention is growing rapidly, but also highlighted the need for more nuanced work on emerging content formats, psychological mechanisms, and contextual differences<sup>[7]</sup>.

Although the existing literature has generated important insights, at least three limitations remain. First, most studies still rely on relatively general dimensions such as informativeness, entertainment, interaction, or trust. These variables are valuable, but they may not fully capture the logic of beauty recommendation content. In beauty short videos, consumers often pay attention to whether the creator appears professionally knowledgeable, whether the demonstration feels authentic, and whether the content is practically useful for real purchase and usage decisions. These three dimensions - professionalism, authenticity, and practicality - are highly salient in beauty consumption, yet they have received less systematic attention in the short-form video literature.

Second, prior studies have more often emphasized positive mechanisms such as trust, parasocial interaction, perceived value, or shared values. By contrast, the role of perceived risk has received less integrated treatment in this context. This is a notable gap because beauty consumption is inherently uncertain. Consumers may worry about product performance, skin compatibility, ingredient safety, or wasted money. At the same time, beauty recommendation videos may reduce such uncertainty by offering demonstrations, reviews, and comparisons. It is therefore theoretically meaningful to examine perceived value and perceived risk together rather than treating only one psychological pathway as central.

Third, there is still limited evidence focusing specifically on college students in the Chinese Douyin/TikTok beauty context. College students are heavy users of short-form video platforms and active consumers of beauty recommendation content. Yet they also differ from other consumer groups in at least two ways. They are often highly responsive to digital content and social influence, but their purchase decisions are constrained by limited budgets and still-developing consumption experience. This makes them an important group for understanding how short-form beauty content translates into actual decision-making. To address these gaps, this study examines how professionalism, authenticity, and practicality in beauty recommendation videos influence college students' purchase decisions. In this manuscript, TikTok is used as a general label for the short-form video commerce context, whereas the empirical data were collected from Chinese college students in the Douyin environment. Drawing on the stimulus-organism-response framework, the study conceptualizes the three content characteristics as stimuli, perceived value and perceived risk as organism variables, and purchase decision as the behavioral response. It also explores whether utilitarian and hedonic consumption values shape selected relationships. This study makes three main contributions. First, it refines short-form video content research by focusing on beauty-specific content characteristics rather than only generic platform features. Second, it extends the application of the stimulus-organism-response framework by comparing a value-building mechanism with a risk-reduction mechanism in the same model. Third, it

provides evidence from the Douyin/TikTok beauty recommendation context among Chinese college students, thereby adding a more specific social commerce setting to the broader literature on influencer marketing and purchase intention.

Based on the above arguments, this study advances three sets of propositions. First, professionalism, authenticity, and practicality are expected to positively affect purchase decision. Second, these relationships are expected to be transmitted primarily through perceived value and, to a lesser extent, through perceived risk. Third, utilitarian and hedonic consumption values are explored as potential boundary conditions that may shape selected psychological paths.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Research Design

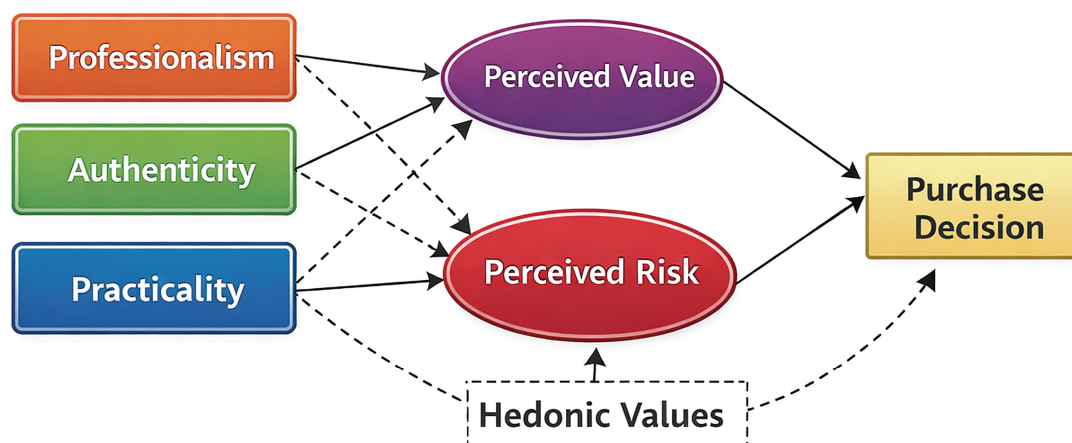
This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine how the content characteristics of beauty recommendation videos influence college students' purchase decisions. The research model was grounded in the stimulus-organism-response framework, in which professionalism, authenticity, and practicality were treated as stimulus variables; perceived value and perceived risk were modeled as organism variables; and purchase decision was treated as the behavioral response<sup>[8]</sup>. In addition, utilitarian and hedonic consumption values were explored as boundary conditions that may shape selected relationships in the model.

A survey design was considered appropriate because the study tested a set of theory-driven relationships among latent variables and focused on respondents' current perceptions and decision tendencies in a specific short-form video commerce context. The questionnaire was developed in two stages. A pilot survey was conducted first to refine item wording and eliminate problematic indicators. The formal survey was then administered to the target population using the revised instrument.

The overall research design is presented in Figure 1.

### 2.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study



The conceptual framework places professionalism, authenticity, and practicality on the stimulus side of the model. Perceived value and perceived risk represent organism variables, and purchase decision represents the response variable. Utilitarian and hedonic consumption values are considered boundary conditions in the exploratory moderation analysis.

### 2.3 Sampling and Data Collection

The target population of this study consisted of Chinese college students who had been exposed to beauty recommendation videos on Douyin. A non-probability convenience sampling strategy was adopted because the study focused on a specific user group and required efficient access to respondents through online channels. The questionnaire was distributed through Tencent Questionnaire, WeChat contacts, WeChat groups, and campus-related online communities. These channels were appropriate because college students are highly active in mobile social media environments and can be reached efficiently through platform-based recruitment. The same online channels were also used during the pilot stage of the study.

Before the formal survey, a pilot test was conducted to improve the content validity and clarity of the instrument. A total of

110 pilot questionnaires were collected, of which 77 were valid and used for preliminary reliability and exploratory factor analyses. Based on the pilot results, several items with low factor loadings, cross-loadings, or weak conceptual fit were removed. This process led to a more concise and stable measurement instrument for the main survey.

The formal survey yielded 372 valid responses for empirical analysis. Respondents were screened to ensure that they were current college students and had experience watching beauty recommendation videos on Douyin/TikTok. The final sample size was adequate for multivariate analysis and mediation testing, given the number of retained observed variables in the measurement model. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with each statement and stronger perceived presence of the underlying construct.

## 2.4 Measures

The questionnaire included eight constructs: professionalism, authenticity, practicality, perceived value, perceived risk, utilitarian consumption values, hedonic consumption values, and purchase decision. The measurement design drew on established studies in influencer marketing, short-form video marketing, consumer value, and consumer risk research<sup>[9]</sup>. Item wording was adapted to the beauty recommendation context and then refined through the pilot test.

Professionalism refers to the extent to which creators provide knowledgeable, credible, and product-relevant explanations and recommendations, such as ingredient interpretation, skin-type matching, and usage guidance. Authenticity refers to the extent to which the video presents product effects, usage experiences, and claims in a realistic and non-exaggerated way. Practicality refers to the extent to which the content provides usable and decision-relevant information, such as product comparisons, usage instructions, and actionable purchase suggestions.

Perceived value was conceptualized as the consumer's overall evaluation of whether the recommended product is worth buying after weighing expected benefits against expected costs<sup>[9][10]</sup>. Perceived risk captured concerns about uncertainty and possible negative outcomes in the purchase decision, especially in relation to product safety, product performance, and financial loss<sup>[11]</sup>. Utilitarian consumption values and hedonic consumption values were measured to reflect two different consumption orientations<sup>[12]</sup>. Finally, purchase decision tendency was measured through respondents' willingness to purchase products recommended in beauty recommendation videos.

## 2.5 Instrument Refinement and Data Analysis

As shown in Table 1, the final instrument retained only those items that were conceptually clear and statistically acceptable after the pilot test. Reliability analysis was first conducted for each construct in the pilot stage. An exploratory factor analysis was then conducted using principal component extraction and varimax rotation. Items with low factor loadings, cross-loadings, or weak conceptual alignment with their intended construct were considered for deletion. One item from purchase decision, one item from professionalism, one item from utilitarian consumption values, one item from perceived value, and two items from practicality were removed in this process.

Data analysis was conducted in several steps. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample characteristics. Second, reliability and validity tests were performed to evaluate the measurement model, including internal consistency, convergent validity, and factor structure. Third, common method bias was assessed because the data were collected through a self-reported questionnaire at a single point in time. Fourth, correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships among the main constructs. Finally, regression-based analyses were conducted to assess direct effects, mediation effects, and exploratory moderation effects. The analyses were performed using SPSS 26.0 and SPSSAU.

Table 1. Summary of constructs and measurement design

Construct	Definition	Items	Example Item
Professionalism	The extent to which the creator provides expert, credible, and product-relevant information	3	The creator can provide professional and objective advice for different skin types and makeup needs.
Authenticity	The extent to which the video presents product effects and experiences in a realistic and non-exaggerated way	4	The video does not use excessive filters or effects to exaggerate the product outcome.

Construct	Definition	Items	Example Item
Practicality	The extent to which the content offers useful and applicable information for real purchase and usage decisions	2	The product comparison or matching advice in the video is useful for me.
Perceived Value	The respondent's overall judgment that the recommended beauty product is worth buying	4	Overall, the product recommended in the video is worth purchasing.
Perceived Risk	The respondent's concern about possible negative outcomes of purchasing the recommended product	6	I worry that this product may cause skin problems, such as allergies.
Utilitarian Consumption Values	A functional and task-oriented tendency in beauty consumption	2	I pay more attention to whether the product can effectively solve a practical problem.
Hedonic Consumption Values	An enjoyment-oriented tendency that emphasizes pleasure and emotional experience in beauty consumption	3	I enjoy the pleasure of trying new beauty products.
Purchase Decision	The respondent's tendency to purchase products recommended in TikTok beauty videos	2	I am willing to buy the beauty product recommended in the video.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Sample Profile

A total of 372 valid responses were included in the final analysis. As shown in Table 2, female respondents accounted for the majority of the sample (83.06%), which is broadly consistent with the audience profile of beauty recommendation content on short-form video platforms. In terms of academic year, sophomores accounted for the largest proportion (44.09%), followed by freshmen (22.04%), juniors (19.62%), and seniors (14.25%). Regarding monthly disposable living expenses, most respondents reported budgets between RMB 1001 and 1500 (41.94%) or between RMB 1501 and 2000 (31.18%). In addition, exposure to beauty recommendation videos was high: 20.43% reported watching such content every day and 50.00% reported watching it frequently. The sample also showed strong behavioral relevance to the research context, as 97.58% of respondents reported that they had engaged in beauty consumption triggered by such videos at least occasionally.

As Table 2 indicates, the respondents were not only frequent short-video users but also highly engaged with beauty recommendation content. This supports the contextual suitability of the sample for testing the proposed model.

Table 2. Sample profile of respondents (N = 372)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	63	16.94
	Female	309	83.06
Academic year	Freshman	82	22.04
	Sophomore	164	44.09
	Junior	73	19.62
	Senior	53	14.25
Monthly disposable living expenses	RMB 1000 or below	40	10.75
	RMB 1001-1500	156	41.94
	RMB 1501-2000	116	31.18
	RMB 2001 and above	60	16.13

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Frequency of watching beauty recommendation videos	Every day	76	20.43
	Frequently	186	50.00
	Occasionally	104	27.96
	Rarely	6	1.61
Beauty consumption triggered by recommendation videos	Many times	172	46.24
	Occasionally	191	51.34
	Never	9	2.42

### 3.2 Reliability and Validity

The internal consistency of the scales was first assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients and corrected item-total correlations. As shown in Table 3, the alpha coefficients ranged from 0.602 to 0.921. Perceived risk (alpha = 0.921), authenticity (alpha = 0.854), and perceived value (alpha = 0.822) showed strong internal consistency. Professionalism (alpha = 0.726), hedonic consumption values (alpha = 0.784), and purchase decision (alpha = 0.726) also reached acceptable levels. Practicality (alpha = 0.651) and utilitarian consumption values (alpha = 0.602) were slightly lower, but both were retained because each scale contained only two items and the retained indicators remained theoretically meaningful and statistically usable.

Construct validity was then examined through KMO and Bartlett's test, as well as confirmatory factor analysis. The KMO value was 0.925 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (chi-square = 5386.878, df = 325,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the dataset was suitable for factor analysis. Table 3 also reports the AVE and CR values. Authenticity, perceived value, perceived risk, hedonic consumption values, and purchase decision all exceeded the conventional thresholds for both CR and AVE. Professionalism showed a CR above 0.7 and an AVE close to 0.5. Practicality and utilitarian consumption values were somewhat lower, but both remained within an acceptable range when considering the small number of retained items and their theoretical relevance. Overall, the measurement model showed acceptable convergent validity.

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity results

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	CR
Professionalism	3	0.726	0.472	0.728
Authenticity	4	0.854	0.596	0.855
Practicality	2	0.651	0.482	0.651
Perceived Value	4	0.822	0.540	0.824
Perceived Risk	6	0.921	0.662	0.921
Utilitarian Consumption Values	2	0.602	0.435	0.605
Hedonic Consumption Values	3	0.784	0.550	0.785
Purchase Decision	2	0.726	0.573	0.728

The overall measurement model also demonstrated acceptable fit. As shown in Table 4, the chi-square to degrees-of-freedom ratio was 2.187, RMSEA was 0.057, RMR was 0.041, SRMR was 0.042, and the incremental fit indices CFI, TLI, and IFI were all above 0.9. Although GFI and NFI were slightly below the conventional 0.90 threshold, the overall pattern of fit indices indicates an acceptable model fit.

Because all variables were measured through self-reports in a single questionnaire, common method bias was also tested using Harman's single-factor test. The first unrotated factor explained 34.13% of the total variance, which was below the 40% threshold. This result suggests that common method bias was unlikely to threaten the validity of the findings.

Table 4. Measurement model fit indices

Index	Value
chi-square/df	2.187
GFI	0.888
RMSEA	0.057
RMR	0.041
CFI	0.938
NFI	0.893
TLI	0.926
IFI	0.939
AGFI	0.855
PGFI	0.686
PNFI	0.745
PCFI	0.782
SRMR	0.042

### 3.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations are reported in Table 5. Purchase decision had a mean score of 3.949 (SD = 0.739), indicating a moderately positive tendency toward purchasing products recommended in beauty recommendation videos. Among the independent variables, practicality had the highest mean (M = 3.922, SD = 0.725), followed by professionalism (M = 3.804, SD = 0.700) and authenticity (M = 3.538, SD = 0.838).

The correlations were generally consistent with the theoretical expectations. Purchase decision was positively correlated with professionalism ( $r = 0.536$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), authenticity ( $r = 0.543$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), practicality ( $r = 0.516$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and perceived value ( $r = 0.655$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). By contrast, perceived risk was not significantly correlated with purchase decision, suggesting that risk perception may be less central than value perception in this context. In addition, professionalism, authenticity, and practicality were all positively correlated with perceived value, while authenticity was negatively correlated with perceived risk ( $r = -0.211$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These initial findings provided support for the subsequent regression and mediation analyses.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Purchase Decision	3.949	0.739	1							
2. Hedonic Consumption Values	3.744	0.837	0.587**	1						
3. Utilitarian Consumption Values	4.230	0.697	0.342**	0.234**	1					
4. Perceived Risk	3.491	1.046	-0.076	-0.129*	0.226**	1				
5. Perceived Value	3.745	0.755	0.655**	0.542**	0.358**	-0.181**	1			
6. Practicality	3.922	0.725	0.516**	0.446**	0.433**	-0.059	0.612**	1		
7. Authenticity	3.538	0.838	0.543**	0.490**	0.308**	-0.211**	0.742**	0.551**	1	
8. Professionalism	3.804	0.700	0.536**	0.453**	0.387**	-0.094	0.704**	0.637**	0.702**	1

Note. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

### 3.4 Hypothesis Testing

The direct effects of professionalism, authenticity, and practicality on purchase decision were tested using multiple regression analysis. As shown in Table 6, all three content characteristics had significant positive effects on purchase decision. Practicality showed the largest unstandardized coefficient in the direct-effect model ( $B = 0.249$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed closely by authenticity ( $B = 0.245$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while professionalism also remained significant ( $B = 0.196$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). The model explained 37.6% of the variance in purchase decision ( $R$ -squared = 0.376). Multicollinearity was not a concern, as all VIF values were below 5.

These findings indicate that higher-quality beauty recommendation content is associated with stronger purchase decision tendencies among college students.

*Table 6. Regression results for the direct effects of content characteristics on purchase decision*

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	1.361	0.185	-	7.366	<0.001
Practicality	0.249	0.055	0.244	4.494	<0.001
Authenticity	0.245	0.052	0.278	4.716	<0.001
Professionalism	0.196	0.067	0.186	2.915	0.004

The next set of analyses examined whether the three content characteristics influenced perceived value and perceived risk. As shown in Table 7, professionalism ( $B = 0.283$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), authenticity ( $B = 0.404$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and practicality ( $B = 0.206$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) all positively affected perceived value. The explanatory power of the model was relatively high ( $R$ -squared = 0.639), suggesting that the three content dimensions are strong predictors of value perception in this context.

*Table 7. Regression results for the effects of content characteristics on perceived value*

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.428	0.144	-	2.981	0.003
Professionalism	0.283	0.052	0.262	5.411	<0.001
Authenticity	0.404	0.040	0.449	10.022	<0.001
Practicality	0.206	0.043	0.198	4.791	<0.001

By contrast, the regression on perceived risk in Table 8 shows a more selective pattern. Only authenticity had a significant negative effect on perceived risk ( $B = -0.372$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while professionalism and practicality were not significant predictors. The model explained only 5.2% of the variance in perceived risk, indicating that the three content characteristics were much more effective in shaping perceived value than in reducing perceived risk.

*Table 8. Regression results for the effects of content characteristics on perceived risk*

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	4.041	0.322	-	12.532	<0.001
Professionalism	0.123	0.117	0.082	1.049	0.295
Authenticity	-0.372	0.091	-0.298	-4.111	<0.001
Practicality	0.076	0.097	0.053	0.788	0.431

The effects of perceived value and perceived risk on purchase decision were then tested. As shown in Table 9, perceived value had a significant positive effect on purchase decision ( $B = 0.648$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas perceived risk was not significant ( $B = 0.031$ ,  $p = 0.270$ ).

Table 9. Regression results for the effects of perceived value and perceived risk on purchase decision

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	1.413	0.193	-	7.326	<0.001
Perceived Value	0.648	0.039	0.663	16.585	<0.001
Perceived Risk	0.031	0.028	0.044	1.105	0.270

Bootstrap mediation analysis was conducted using 5,000 resamples. The results showed that perceived value significantly mediated the effects of professionalism, authenticity, and practicality on purchase decision, whereas perceived risk did not mediate any of the three relationships. As shown in Table 10, the indirect effects via perceived value were significant because the bootstrap confidence intervals did not include zero.

Table 10. Bootstrap mediation results

Path	Indirect Effect	95% CI	p	Interpretation
Professionalism - Perceived Value - Purchase Decision	0.131	0.073 ~ 0.199	<0.001	Full mediation
Authenticity - Perceived Value - Purchase Decision	0.186	0.124 ~ 0.260	<0.001	Full mediation
Practicality - Perceived Value - Purchase Decision	0.095	0.048 ~ 0.151	<0.001	Partial mediation
Professionalism - Perceived Risk - Purchase Decision	0.004	-0.005 ~ 0.016	0.445	Not supported
Authenticity - Perceived Risk - Purchase Decision	-0.011	-0.033 ~ 0.008	0.225	Not supported
Practicality - Perceived Risk - Purchase Decision	0.002	-0.005 ~ 0.013	0.573	Not supported

More specifically, perceived value fully mediated the effects of professionalism and authenticity on purchase decision. For authenticity, the indirect effect through perceived value was 0.131 (95% CI = 0.073 to 0.199,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the corresponding direct effect became non-significant after perceived value was entered into the model. Practicality, by contrast, retained both a significant indirect effect via perceived value (0.095, 95% CI = 0.048 to 0.151,  $p < 0.001$ ) and a significant direct effect, indicating partial mediation. All indirect paths through perceived risk were non-significant.

Overall, the mediation results indicate that perceived value is the core psychological pathway through which beauty recommendation video content influences purchase decision in this context.

The originally specified moderation assumptions were largely unsupported, especially for utilitarian consumption values and for perceived risk. As shown in Table 11, none of the interaction terms between content characteristics and either utilitarian or hedonic consumption values significantly predicted perceived risk. This suggests that the relationship between content characteristics and perceived risk was relatively stable across different consumption value orientations.

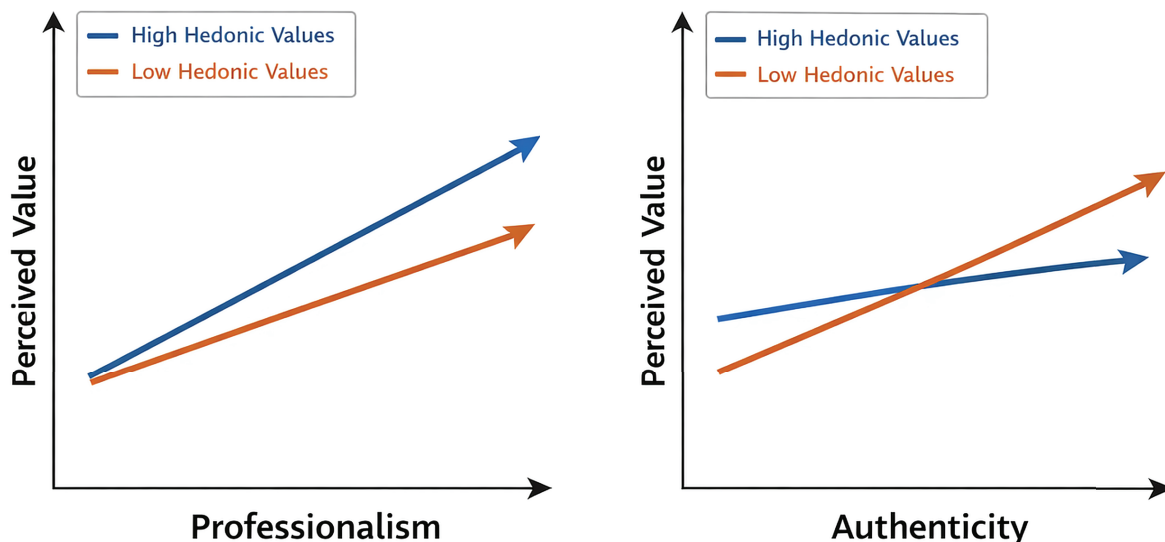
However, additional interaction analysis for perceived value yielded two significant findings. First, the interaction between professionalism and hedonic consumption values was positive and significant ( $B = 0.126$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ), indicating that hedonic consumption values strengthened the positive effect of professionalism on perceived value. Second, the interaction between authenticity and hedonic consumption values was negative and significant ( $B = -0.107$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), indicating that hedonic consumption values weakened the positive effect of authenticity on perceived value. No significant interaction effect was found between practicality and hedonic consumption values.

To illustrate the two significant interaction effects, Figure 2 illustrates the two significant simple-slope patterns. For respondents with stronger hedonic consumption values, professionalism produced a steeper positive increase in perceived value. By contrast, the positive effect of authenticity on perceived value became weaker at higher levels of hedonic consumption values.

Table 11. Exploratory moderation results

Interaction Term	Dependent Variable	B	SE	Beta	p
Professionalism × Utilitarian Values	Perceived Value	-0.048	0.069	-0.054	0.487
Authenticity × Utilitarian Values	Perceived Value	0.107	0.058	0.118	0.069
Practicality × Utilitarian Values	Perceived Value	-0.085	0.055	-0.101	0.121
Professionalism × Hedonic Values	Perceived Value	0.126	0.056	0.115	0.025
Authenticity × Hedonic Values	Perceived Value	-0.107	0.042	-0.115	0.012
Practicality × Hedonic Values	Perceived Value	-0.039	0.048	-0.039	0.413
Professionalism × Utilitarian Values	Perceived Risk	-0.242	0.152	-0.195	0.112
Authenticity × Utilitarian Values	Perceived Risk	0.246	0.128	0.197	0.056
Practicality × Utilitarian Values	Perceived Risk	-0.180	0.121	-0.153	0.136
Professionalism × Hedonic Values	Perceived Risk	-0.134	0.123	-0.089	0.275
Authenticity × Hedonic Values	Perceived Risk	-0.113	0.093	-0.088	0.225
Practicality × Hedonic Values	Perceived Risk	0.198	0.105	0.142	0.059

Figure 2. Simple slope plots for the significant moderation effects of hedonic consumption values.



Taken together, the results indicate that the proposed framework was partially supported. The strongest and most stable findings concerned the direct effects of content characteristics and the mediating role of perceived value. By contrast, perceived risk was relatively weak in this context, and moderation effects emerged only in exploratory analysis involving hedonic consumption values.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Beauty Recommendation Content Characteristics Matter Beyond Generic Video Attributes

The present study examined how three content characteristics of beauty recommendation videos - professionalism, authenticity, and practicality - influence college students' purchase decisions. Drawing on the stimulus-organism-response framework, the study compared two psychological pathways, perceived value and perceived risk, and further explored whether consumption values shaped selected effects. Overall, the findings suggest that beauty recommendation content affects college students mainly by enhancing perceived value rather than by reducing perceived risk. These findings provide a more

fine-grained explanation of short-form beauty video persuasion in social commerce.

A first important finding is that professionalism, authenticity, and practicality all positively influenced purchase decision. This result supports the view that short-form video persuasion is not driven only by platform exposure or general entertainment value. Instead, viewers actively evaluate the informational and experiential quality of the content before forming a decision tendency. This conclusion is broadly consistent with prior influencer marketing research showing that message value, credibility, and authenticity affect trust and purchase intention<sup>[1]</sup>. It also aligns with short-form video studies that have emphasized usefulness, engagement, and creator-related perceptions as important predictors of consumer response<sup>[4]</sup>.

At the same time, the present study adds a more context-specific perspective. Much of the existing literature treats short-form video content through broad dimensions such as informativeness, ease of use, entertainment, or interaction<sup>[7]</sup>. These dimensions are important, but they do not fully capture the decision logic of beauty recommendation content. Beauty consumption is strongly tied to personal suitability, usage experience, visual performance, and trial-based evaluation. In this context, professionalism, authenticity, and practicality are particularly meaningful because they address three key consumer concerns: whether the creator seems knowledgeable, whether the recommendation feels believable, and whether the content helps solve an actual purchase problem.

This refinement is theoretically useful because it suggests that short-form video content should not always be treated as a generic stimulus. In beauty social commerce, consumers may respond more strongly to domain-specific content cues than to broad platform-level attributes. The present findings therefore extend earlier studies by showing that beauty recommendation videos work not only as entertaining social media content, but also as decision-supporting information carriers.

#### **4.2 Perceived Value Is the Core Psychological Mechanism**

One of the most important findings of this study is that perceived value played a significant mediating role, whereas perceived risk did not. More specifically, professionalism, authenticity, and practicality all increased perceived value, and perceived value strongly predicted purchase decision. This indicates that beauty recommendation videos shape decision-making mainly by helping viewers feel that the recommended product is worthwhile, suitable, and potentially beneficial.

This result is consistent with previous research showing that trust and value-related evaluations are central mechanisms in influencer and short-form video marketing<sup>[1]</sup>. Luo et al. found that content quality on short-video platforms promotes purchase intention through trust and perceived value<sup>[4]</sup>. Likewise, prior beauty influencer studies have shown that viewers are more likely to respond positively when creators appear credible and when content supports trust-building<sup>[3]</sup>. However, the present study extends those findings in an important way: rather than focusing primarily on trust, it highlights perceived value as the more direct and stable pathway linking beauty short-video content to purchase decision.

This value-centered mechanism is understandable in the beauty recommendation context. Beauty videos often show product texture, application effects, before-and-after comparisons, skin-fit suggestions, and price-related commentary. These cues make it easier for viewers to judge whether a product is worth trying or worth buying. As a result, the video does not merely create interest; it also supports value assessment. In other words, the content acts as a form of informal decision assistance, helping viewers estimate potential functional, emotional, and monetary returns.

Another notable point is that authenticity showed a particularly strong effect on perceived value. This suggests that in beauty recommendation settings, value is not built only through product claims or professional explanation. It is also built through a sense of realism. When the audience feels that the creator is honestly displaying product effects and limitations, the recommendation appears more diagnostic and therefore more valuable. This interpretation is broadly compatible with authenticity-based persuasion findings in influencer research<sup>[2]</sup>, but here the role of authenticity is linked specifically to value formation.

#### **4.3 Why Perceived Risk Was Weak in This Context**

In contrast to perceived value, perceived risk showed a much weaker role in the model. Only authenticity significantly reduced perceived risk, and perceived risk did not significantly predict purchase decision. As a result, none of the indirect paths through perceived risk were supported. This finding suggests that the psychological mechanism in this context is not primarily about risk reduction.

At a theoretical level, this result does not mean that perceived risk is irrelevant in consumer behavior. Rather, it suggests that in the specific setting of beauty recommendation videos for college students, risk concerns may be less central than value judgments. Several explanations are plausible.

First, many beauty products promoted in short-form videos are low- to mid-priced, highly replaceable, and easy to trial. In such cases, the perceived cost of making a wrong decision may be relatively limited. Consumers may therefore be more willing to experiment, especially when compared with high-priced durable goods or high-commitment service purchases. Under these conditions, the key question becomes not "What could go wrong?" but "Is this worth buying?" This helps explain why perceived value had a much stronger role than perceived risk.

Second, short-form beauty videos often reduce uncertainty by making product usage highly visible. Demonstrations, product comparisons, skin-type advice, and viewer comments may partially substitute for the lack of direct product trial. Although such cues may not eliminate all uncertainty, they can reduce ambiguity enough that risk ceases to be the dominant psychological barrier. This interpretation is consistent with the broader short-form video literature, which suggests that rich media content can strengthen user confidence and facilitate purchase-related judgments<sup>[4][6]</sup>.

Third, the sample itself may matter. College students are intensive digital media users and are accustomed to processing large amounts of online recommendation content. They may rely on repeated exposure, peer comparison, and multiple creators' opinions to inform decisions. In that case, the influence of any single perceived risk cue may become diluted, while cumulative value impressions remain strong. This also suggests that consumer experience with digital content environments may weaken the explanatory power of traditional risk-based mechanisms in some social commerce settings.

From a contribution perspective, this finding is particularly useful because many studies tend to assume that trust enhancement and risk reduction are symmetric mechanisms. The present results suggest that these two mechanisms are not necessarily equal in explanatory power. In low-commitment beauty recommendation settings, value-building may be the more meaningful explanation. Future research should test whether the same pattern holds for high-priced, high-involvement, or safety-sensitive product categories.

#### **4.4 Hedonic Consumption Values Play a Selective Rather Than Uniform Role**

The moderation analysis produced a mixed but theoretically interesting pattern. The originally specified moderation assumptions were largely unsupported, especially for utilitarian consumption values and for perceived risk. However, additional interaction tests showed that hedonic consumption values strengthened the positive effect of professionalism on perceived value while weakening the effect of authenticity on perceived value.

This selective pattern suggests that hedonic orientation is not a general amplifier of all persuasive content. Instead, it changes how viewers interpret specific content cues. For respondents with stronger hedonic consumption values, professionalism may not be experienced only as technical expertise or factual guidance. In beauty consumption, professional content can also enhance the imagination of self-improvement, beauty upgrading, and aesthetic satisfaction. A creator who explains ingredients, techniques, or fit in a knowledgeable way may therefore make the product feel more aspirational and rewarding. Under such conditions, professionalism becomes not only informationally useful but also emotionally and symbolically valuable.

The negative interaction between hedonic consumption values and authenticity is more nuanced. One possible interpretation is that viewers with stronger hedonic orientations pay attention not only to realism but also to atmosphere, visual pleasure, and fantasy. In beauty short videos, highly authentic content may sometimes reduce the degree of aesthetic idealization that hedonic viewers enjoy. This does not mean that authenticity becomes unimportant. Rather, it suggests that for highly hedonic viewers, authenticity may not increase perceived value as strongly as it does for viewers who are less driven by pleasure and image-based enjoyment.

This result resonates partly with influencer marketing research showing that consumers respond differently to authenticity, relational closeness, and content style depending on their psychological orientation<sup>[2][7]</sup>. Still, the present study adds a new nuance by showing that hedonic consumption values do not affect all beauty content dimensions in the same way. This has both theoretical and practical relevance because it suggests that consumer value orientation should be treated as a selective

boundary condition rather than a universal moderator.

#### **4.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications**

This study offers several theoretical implications. First, it extends the application of the stimulus-organism-response framework to a more specific short-form video social commerce context. Previous short-video studies have often examined general content features or platform experiences<sup>[4][5]</sup>. By focusing on beauty recommendation videos, the present study shows that the SOR model remains useful when the stimulus is defined through more domain-specific content characteristics.

Second, the study refines the conceptualization of short-form video content. Instead of relying only on generic attributes such as entertainment or informativeness, it identifies professionalism, authenticity, and practicality as a meaningful content structure in beauty recommendation settings. This helps connect influencer marketing research with product-category-specific consumer logic.

Third, the study contributes to the literature on psychological mechanisms in digital persuasion by comparing perceived value and perceived risk within the same model. The results show that the two mechanisms do not operate with equal force. In this context, value-building is more central than risk-reduction. This distinction may help future studies better explain why some forms of social media persuasion succeed even when objective uncertainty is not fully removed.

Finally, the exploratory moderation results suggest that consumption values deserve more nuanced treatment in future research. Rather than assuming that utilitarian and hedonic values simply strengthen or weaken content effects in a uniform way, future studies should examine how different value orientations interact with specific content cues and product categories. The findings also provide several practical implications for brands, creators, and platforms. For beauty brands, the results suggest that content strategies should focus on increasing consumers' perceived value rather than only attempting to minimize perceived risk. In practical terms, this means emphasizing realistic product fit, usage guidance, and value-for-money cues. For creators, the results highlight the importance of balancing expertise and realism. Professional explanations and practical demonstrations are both effective, while authenticity remains a key driver of perceived value. For platforms, the results indicate that recommendation systems should not privilege only visual attractiveness or engagement metrics. Greater support for content that combines professionalism, authenticity, and practicality may improve not only user trust but also decision quality.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study examined how beauty recommendation videos shape college students' purchase decisions through specific content characteristics. Drawing on the stimulus-organism-response framework, the study compared the mediating roles of perceived value and perceived risk and explored the boundary role of consumption values.

Three main conclusions can be drawn from the findings. First, professionalism, authenticity, and practicality all positively influence purchase decision, suggesting that college students do not respond to beauty recommendation videos only at a superficial or entertainment level. Instead, they evaluate whether the content is knowledgeable, believable, and useful for actual purchase decisions. Second, perceived value serves as the core psychological mechanism linking content characteristics to purchase decision, whereas perceived risk does not show a significant mediating role. This indicates that in the beauty recommendation context, value-building is more influential than risk-reduction. Third, hedonic consumption values do not uniformly strengthen all persuasive effects. Rather, they selectively shape how specific content cues are translated into value perception.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature in three ways. It refines the understanding of beauty-related short-form video content by identifying professionalism, authenticity, and practicality as distinct and meaningful dimensions. It extends the stimulus-organism-response framework to a beauty-focused short-video social commerce setting. It also shows that in a low-to medium-risk consumer context, perceived value may be more central than perceived risk in explaining digital persuasion outcomes.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The sample focused only on college students, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other consumer groups. Because the data were collected through a cross-sectional questionnaire, causal inferences should be made with caution. In addition, the study centered on beauty recommendation

videos in the Chinese context; future research may compare different platforms, product categories, or age groups. Further studies may also integrate additional psychological mechanisms, such as trust, parasocial interaction, or flow, to deepen the understanding of short-form video persuasion.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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