BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOSITY, UBUNTU VALUES, ASPIRATIONAL SOCIAL STATUS, SKIN BLEACHING INFLUENCED AUTHENTICITY, TIKTOK ALGORITHM EXPOSURE, ATTITUDE TOWARDS BLEACHING/COLOURISM, ON CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND PURCHASE INTENTION IN ZIMBABWE

BY

ALWYN MUNATSWA

REGISTRATION NUMBER: B251901A

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DIGITAL MARKETING DEGREE OF BINDURA

UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION. FACULTY OF COMMERCE.

JUNE 2026

SUPERVISOR: DR D. JARAVAZA

APPROVAL FORM

We, the undersigned, confirm that upon examining the research, it meets the standards of research and is appropriate to be submitted for acceptance by Bindura University of Science Education. The document is a dissertation entitled; Examining the effects of religiosity, ubuntu, aspirational social status, skin bleaching influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithm exposure, attitude towards bleaching/colourism, on consumer engagement and purchase intention in Zimbabwe, authored by Alwyn Munatswa as part of her Master of Science in Digital Marketing programme

19 AUGUST 2026 ……

Student Date

27 AUGUST 2026. PP ……..……..

Supervisor Date

…..…….

Department Chairperson Date

RELEASE FORM

Name of author: Alwyn Munatswa

Reg number: B251901A

Dissertation Title: Examining the effects of religiosity, ubuntu, aspirational social status, skin bleaching influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithm exposure, attitude towards bleaching/colourism, on consumer engagement and purchase intention in Zimbabwe

Degree Title: MSc in Digital Marketing

Year this degree granted: 2026

The Bindura University of Science Education Library is granted permission to make individual copies of this dissertation and also distribute or sell such copies for scholarly, research or private purposes only. Reproducing or using most sections of the work requires the author's permission.

Signed: ……

Date: 19 AUGUST 2026

Permanent address: 6223 Southview Park
Harare
Phone Number: +263774587250
Email: munatswa@gmail.com

DEDICATION

To my loving partner in life and the mother of our children, thank you for being there for me unconditionally, loving me, taking care of our children, and supporting me in times where I was sure I'd never make it!! It has been because of your constant encouragement that I have been able to continue to be motivated and achieve my academic goal(s). This accomplishment will not only be mine, but mostly for you.

I would also like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to Apostle Godfrey Kudita for his unwavering faithfulness through his support, direction, prayer, wisdom and commitment to me which helped to keep me motivated. His advice, recommendations and requests for assistance provided an enormous amount of encouragement and assistance to me and provided me with significant assistance in completing this project.

To my dearly loved children Shane Shallom, Shemaiah, Shiloh, and all of the joys you brought to my life through your love and support during my research. I would not have been able to do this without your understanding and support while I was away from you. My studies and responsibilities as an academic in my life kept me from being able to spend as much time with you as I would have wanted, creating many missed opportunities for us to be together. In the hard times of not being able to spend more time with you, you never stopped showing love, smiling, saying kind things to me, and encouraging me; these were essential for me to be able to continue to finish my studies and have faith that all of the things I worked hard at would eventually result in something good for you and our family.

As this research paper approaches the subject matter of unconditional love, trust, perseverance, and support from both family and individuals, my hope is that it will honour your unconditional, persistent, supportive role in my success. My success was not about me; it was a victory for all those who supported and shared my ambitions.

ABSTRACT

This research analysed the impact of religiosity, the Ubuntu values, and aspirational social status, influencer authenticity, the TikTok algorithm exposure, and perceptions about colourism; subsequently, these influences are linked to engagement in consumer bleaching and purchase intent. This quantitative study consisted of surveys from Zimbabwean TikTok users via a structured questionnaire. In total, 375 questionnaires were sent out with an estimated response rate of 72.8% (273 usable responses received). All data was analysed using SPSS and AMOS (the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and Analysis of Moment Structures). Analysis methods employed were EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis), CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis), testing for reliability using Cronbach's alpha (all constructs were above the recommended 0.70 threshold), and SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) to verify hypothesised relationships. All hypothesised relationships in the model were found to be positive and statistically significant ($p<0.05$). Evidence from the research indicates a strong relationship between religiosity and influencer authenticity ($\beta=0.267$), the TikTok algorithm exposure ($\beta=0.205$), and individuals' opinions on colourism ($\beta=0.313$). This suggests that religion continues to have an important role in influencing consumer perception towards beauty content. In addition to religiosity, we also found that Ubuntu value system to positively contribute toward influencer authenticity ($\beta=0.309$), the TikTok algorithm exposure (($\beta=0.405$), and opinions on colourism ($\beta=0.377$). This indicates that consumers will be influenced in their buying behaviour by concepts related to communal identity and taking care of their fellow man. Aspirational social status also impacted positively on influencer authenticity ($\beta=0.315$), the TikTok algorithm ($\beta=0.258$) and opinions on colourism ($\beta=0.250$). This could imply that consumers' drive to engage with beauty content may be motivated by their desire for social status. In addition to these three factors, influencer authenticity ($\beta=0.419$), TikTok algorithmic exposure ($\beta=0.267$) and attitudes toward colourism ($\beta=0.257$) all had a statistically significant relationship to consumer engagement in bleach purchases. Consumer engagement acted as a strong mediating variable in the relationship between consumer engagement and purchase intention ($\beta=0.759$). The study shows that the way consumers interact with online content related to bleaching is an important way of converting their cultural values, exposure to digital content and social influences into how they make decisions about purchasing products. This study concludes that the combined impact of cultural beliefs, aspirational motivations, algorithm driven exposure, influencer credibility and digital engagement create the intent for skin bleaching products in Zimbabwe. This study contributes to the current body of literature by combining African cultural concepts into the study of digital marketing and consumer behaviour and has practical implications for marketers, policymakers, and other stakeholders in regard to ethical beauty messaging and colourism's influence in the digital world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. D. Jaravaza, for his guidance, support, and patience throughout the entire process of completing my dissertation. His expertise in academics, and pursuit of knowledge have significantly influenced the direction, scope, and overall quality of this research. Guided by his mentorship and leading by example, I was inspired and pushed professionally to think freely and actively participate in academic discussions.

My appreciation also goes to the Faculty of Marketing at Bindura University of Science Education. Their expertise, support, and dedication towards academic excellence were all appreciated. The lecturers' dedication to their teaching and their clear way of conveying information were extremely helpful to me. They took the initiative to teach me about various aspects of marketing along with marketing research techniques and statistical analysis. The intellectual legacy fostered the advancement of critical reasoning and scholarly exploration.

My appreciation goes to my friends and coworkers who helped me develop a vibrant and motivating educational setting for my studies. The implementation of hybrid teaching methods and most academically focused feedback has been crucial in shaping my ideas and restricting the perspective of this study. Their unwavering backing, team spirit, and embracing nature contributed immensely to this experience, and it will leave a mark.

I also wish to thank my colleagues, family members; parents, and siblings, who, aware of the difficulties I encountered during this educational pursuit, supported me with relentless encouragement, prayers, perseverance, and emotional backing, especially trusting in my abilities as my greatest strength during these intense periods. Your involvement was vital in reaching the research objectives, guiding me throughout the development of this dissertation.

Finally, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the participants who generously contributed to my research by offering their time, experiences, and insights. Without their help, I would have ended up as the author without finishing my studies.

Thank you

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE 12

1.0 Introduction 12

1.1 Background of study 13

1.2 Statement of the problem 13

1.3 Purpose of the study 14

1.4 Research objectives 14

1.5 Hypotheses 15

1.7 Assumptions of the study 15

1.8 Delimitations of the study 16

1.9 Limitations of the study 16

1.10 Definition of terms 16

1.11 Summary 17

CHAPTER TWO 18

LITERATURE REVIEW 18

2.0 Introduction 18

2.1 Theoretical review 18

2.1.1 Overarching theories: Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) Ajzen (1991), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Davis (1989), and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) 18

2.2 Empirical Review 22

2.2.1 Religiosity 22

2.2.2 Ubuntu Values 24

2.2.3 Aspirational Social Status 25

2.2.4 Influencer Authenticity 27

2.2.5 TikTok Algorithmic Exposure 28

2.2.6 Attitudes Toward Colourism 30

2.2.7 Consumer Engagement 31

2.2.8 Purchasing intentions 33

2.3 Contextual review: Global, African and Zimbabwean perspectives on skin bleaching/colourism products 34

2.3.1 Global overview of skin bleaching products 34

2.3.2 Skin bleaching products in Africa 35

2.3.3 Skin bleaching/colourism products in Zimbabwe 36

2.4 Hypotheses Development 37

2.4.1 Religiosity and influencer authenticity 37

2.4.2 Religiosity and TikTok algorithmic exposure 38
2.4.3 Religiosity and Attitudes Toward Colourism 39
2.4.4 Ubuntu Values and Influencer Authenticity 40
2.4.5 Ubuntu values and TikTok Algorithmic Exposure 41
2.4.6 Ubuntu Values and Attitudes Toward Colourism 42
2.4.7 Aspirational social status and influencer authenticity 43
2.4.8 Aspirational Social Status and TikTok Algorithmic Exposure 43
2.4.9 Aspirational Social Status and Attitudes Toward Colourism 44
2.4.10 Influencer Authenticity and Consumer Bleaching Engagement 45
2.4.11 TikTok Algorithmic Exposure and Consumer Bleaching Engagement 46
2.4.12 Attitudes Toward Colourism and Consumer Bleaching Engagement 46
2.4.13 Consumer Bleaching Engagement and Purchase Intention 47
2.5 Conceptual Framework 48
2.6 Summary 49
CHAPTER THREE 51
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 51
3.0 Introduction 51
3.1 Research Design 51
3.2 Target Population 51
3.3 Sampling frame 52
3.4 Sample Size 52
3.5 Sampling Procedure 52
3.6 Research Instruments 53
3.6.1 Measurement Scales 54
3.7 Data Collection Procedure 55
3.8 Validity and Reliability 55
3.9 Ethical Considerations 55
3.10 Limitations of the study 56
3.11 Data Analysis 56
3.12 Summary 56
CHAPTER FOUR 58
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION 58
4.0 Introduction 58
4.1 Response Rate 58
4.2 Demographic Profiles 58

4.3 The Uni-dimensionality Tests 60
4.3.1 Religiosity 62
4.3.2 Ubuntu Values 63
4.3.3 Aspirational Social Status 65
4.3.4 Influencer authenticity 67
4.3.5 TikTok algorithmic exposure 68
4.3.6 Attitudes Toward Colourism 70
4.3.7 Consumer Engagement 71
4.3.8 Purchase Intention 72
4.4 Measurement Model 74
4.5 Construct Validity 77
4.6 Convergent Validity 77
4.7 Discriminant Validity 77
4.8 Reliability 78
4.9 Hypothesis Testing 80
4.10 Results and Discussion 96
4.11 Summary 97
CHAPTER FIVE 98
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION 98
5.0 Introduction 98
5.1 Summary 99
5.2 Conclusions 99
5.3 Recommendations 100
REFERENCES 102

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Measurement Scales 54
Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents 58
Table 3: Reliability summary for study constructs 61
Table 4 Consolidated KMO and Bartlett's test results for all variables 61
Table 5: Factor Analysis results for religiosity 63
Table 6: Factor Analysis results for Ubuntu Philosophy 64
Table 7: Factor Analysis Results for Aspirational Social Status 66
Table 8: Factor Analysis Results for Influencer Authenticity 67
Table 9: Factor Analysis Results for TikTok Algorithmic Exposure 69
Table 10: Factor Analysis Results for Attitudes Toward Colourism 70
Table 11: Factor Analysis results of Consumer Engagement 71
Table 12: Factor Analysis results of Purchase Intention 73
Table 13: Measurement Assessment Model 75
Table 14:Model Fit 78
Table 15: Baseline Comparisons 78
Table 16: RMSEA 79
Table 17: Analysis of Hypothesis Testing 81

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:Conceptual Framework 48
Figure 3:Measurement Model 74
Figure 4:Structural Model 80

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire 113
Appendix 2:Similarity Report 120
Appendix 3:Similarity Report 121
Appendix 4:AI Report 122
Appendix 5:AI Report 123
Appendix 6:AI Report 124
Appendix 7:AI Report 125

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The worldwide beauty sector has undergone shifts as cultural differences emerge, online usage grows, and audiences become more advanced. Despite its commonality in eastern parts of the world, skin lightening continues to be widespread because of ongoing skin-colour prejudices, colonial legacies, and current aesthetic preferences. In Europe, the authenticity of influencer-driven messages is often a key factor that can either encourage or discourage consumers from making a purchase of a product or service (Liu, Li, and Zhang, 2019; Lou and Yuan, 2019). Moreover, Breves et al. (2020) observed that consumers are more likely to be loyal towards a brand due to the authenticity and authority of the influencer. In Africa, consumption patterns are influenced not solely by online exposure but also by cultural conceptual frameworks like Ubuntu, faith, and aspiration, including individual filiation with society. Ubuntu values looks at the bond and interaction of people, citing the importance of collectivism and considering oneself as part of a wider group, thus often suggesting behaviour that glorifies individual output at the expense of the group (Mutsonziwa, 2020). Religiosity, on a different note, acts to connect with consumers by shaping perceptions of consumption's morality to the extent that it influences attitudes towards beauty practices within different religious demographics (Minton and Cabano, 2024). Aspiration for social status causes people to buy goods and services that are considered luxurious and those that boost their ranking within the social ladder, especially in the case of old Chinese communities (Eastman et al., 1999). In the matter of Zimbabwe, it is rather interesting because in this culture alongside these very ideals, the culture seems to be overly open to technologies such as TikTok. The directive nature of TikTok's settings and content recommendations encourages the proliferation of aesthetic controversies such as prevailing attitudes on skin bleaching. However, there is remarkable ambivalence regarding the lighter skin beauty, privilege and oppression binaries: The problem with the colourism premise is that the lighter skins are being privileged and attractive and the darker skins are being stigmatised (Craddock, 2022). This dissertation seeks to fill that gap by examining how religiosity, Ubuntu values, and aspirational social status influence perceptions of influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes toward colourism and how these factors drive consumer bleaching engagement and purchase intention in Zimbabwe.

1.1 Background of study

Globally, influencer marketing has turned into a big driver for how consumers behave. In Europe, having transparency in influencer partnerships boosts consumer trust, and it also tends to strengthen brand loyalty (Alper and Kuo, 2020). In the United States, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) showed that online reviews and word-of-mouth really matter for purchase choices, so authenticity in digital marketing has become very crucial.

In Africa, cultural values still sit right at the centre of consumer decision-making. Ubuntu points to shared identity and community togetherness (Mutsonziwa, 2020). Religiosity colours moral judgements about spending and buying (Minton and Cabano, 2024). At the same time, wanting an elevated social image encourages people to buy products that communicate prestige, not only usefulness (Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn, 1999).

Zimbabwe is a particularly good space to look at this closely. TikTok's algorithmic sorting has increased visibility for beauty trends, including skin bleaching, by tailoring what people see and pushing product-related content more often. Still, conversations around colourism or skin bleaching are far from settled, because lighter skin is frequently linked with power, advantage and "real" beauty, while darker skin is often pushed to the margins (Craddock, 2022). So, there is this ongoing tension between cultural norms, digital influence, and consumer hopes for status, which makes Zimbabwe an ideal context for this study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Globally, influencer authenticity and consumer involvement, in relation to respective studies, have been well-researched. But few studies have examined the effect of the African cultural aspects, such as religiosity, Ubuntu, acquisition of social status, and colourism, on the consumer's behaviour by the use of digital technologies. Existing studies are mainly concerned with visual performance in the context of the occidental and oriental cultural dynamics (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Lou and Yuan, 2019). Lighter-skinned people are often perceived as more beautiful and privileged in societies influenced by colonial history, yet contemporary literature also discusses colourism as a significant issue (Hunter, 2007; Glenn, 2008). Moreover, global beauty standards are further supported by digital algorithms that amplify content matching these ideals, enhancing their prevalence across the digital landscape (Noble, 2018; Cotter, 2019). There are still very few studies related to beauty and digital ages that concentrate on the African continent, especially Zimbabwe.

Research in Zimbabwe has primarily explored the adoption of technology and consumer confidence in online shopping, but it has paid less attention to the social and ethical concerns related to skin bleaching and beauty standards in digital environments (Chinomona, 2013; Muposhi and Dhurup, 2017). This exclusion is essential since skin whitening serves as a symbolic representation of larger themes such as individual autonomy, upward social movement, and the normalisation driven by the digital age. There is a notable research deficiency concerning the way cultural practices and religious principles determine beauty's role in consumer behaviour, particularly when it involves influencers and their campaign recommendations.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The goal of the current study is to assess the effects of religiosity, Ubuntu, aspirational social status, influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and colourism/skin bleaching attitudes and how these factors affect consumer bleach engagement and buying intention towards skin-lightening products in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Research objectives

The study sought to achieve the following objectives;

1. To examine the influence of religiosity on influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes toward colourism.
2. To investigate how Ubuntu values affect influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes toward colourism.
3. To analyse the role of aspirational social status in shaping influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes toward colourism.
4. To assess the impact of influencer authenticity and TikTok algorithmic exposure on consumer bleaching engagement.
5. To evaluate how attitudes toward colourism influence consumer bleaching engagement.
6. To determine the relationship between consumer bleaching engagement and purchase intention of skin bleaching products in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Hypotheses

H_1a: Religiosity has a positive effect on the way people view influencer authenticity in the promotion of skin-bleaching products.

H_1b: Religiosity significantly influences exposure to TikTok algorithmic exposure related to skin-bleaching products.

H_1c: Religiosity significantly influences attitudes toward colourism.

H_2a: Ubuntu values positively influence perceptions of influencer authenticity.

H_2b: Ubuntu values significantly influence TikTok algorithmic exposure to skin-bleaching content.

H_2c: Ubuntu values significantly influence attitudes toward colourism.

H_3a: Aspirational social status positively influences perceptions of influencer authenticity.

H_3b: Aspirational social status significantly influences TikTok algorithmic exposure to skin-bleaching content.

H_3c: Aspirational social status significantly influences attitudes toward colourism.

H_4: Influencer authenticity positively influences consumer bleaching engagement.

H_5: TikTok algorithmic exposure positively influences consumer bleaching engagement.

H_6: Attitudes toward colourism significantly influence consumer bleaching engagement.

H_7: Consumer bleaching engagement positively influences purchase intention of skin-bleaching products.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study has both academic and practical significance. The study can be viewed as advancing influencer marketing theory through the inclusion of African cultural influences within the digital consumer behaviour framework. Conversely, it offers valuable information to marketers, politicians, and community groups in Zimbabwe to assist in developing campaigns that aim to deter the enforcement of damaging beauty regulations while promoting pride in natural appearances and fostering unity among people.

1.7 Assumptions of the study

The Researcher will ensure that he gets truthful and honest responses anonymously. According to that line of thought, TikTok users in Zimbabwe are more likely to view content about beauty and skin lightening, thus serving as appropriate respondents for the study. Furthermore, it is assumed that cultural ideas like religiosity and Ubuntu significantly influence the behaviour of consumers in Zimbabwe.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

In this study, we shall only focus on the respondents who in Zimbabwe, have access to TikTok, who are followers of beauty content and bleaching of the skin and their users. It will only concentrate on concerns like religiosity, Ubuntu, and aspirational social status as independent variables being influenced by influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes toward colourism and its effects in society as the mediating variables. Consequently, the dependent variables in this study encompass ease of engaging in skin bleaching and the desire to make such purchases. This research study was carried out between January 2026 and June 2026.

1.9 Limitations of the study

The approach employed in the study is restricted in some ways, particularly due to its dependence on individuals self-reported results, a factor that may introduce bias. Financial and time limitations can restrict both the size of the sample and the extent of the study, based on the study question's nature. Variations in Zimbabwe and among ethnic groups, particularly from affluent backgrounds, can pose challenges to making broad generalisations. Additionally, TikTok's methods of content promotion change and adapt with every update, introduction, or guideline, meaning that the results of any activity on the platform will vary based on the current rules in effect at that time.

1.10 Definition of terms

- **Religiosity**: Influence of religious beliefs and practices on consumer decisions.
- **Ubuntu:** An African philosophy emphasising interconnectedness and community harmony.
- **Aspirational social status**: Motivation to purchase products that signal prestige.
- **Influencer authenticity**: Perceived genuineness and trustworthiness of influencers.
- **TikTok algorithmic exposure**: Personalised content recommendations influencing product awareness.
- **Attitude toward colourism**: perceptions and biases related to skin tone differences.
- **Consumer bleaching engagement**: Interaction and involvement with skin bleaching content online.
- **Purchase intention**: Likelihood of buying products promoted online.
- **TPB (Theory of Planned conduct) :** Shows the relationship between attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control in determining what people want to do in their conduct.
- **TRA (Theory of Reasoned Action):** Explains the effects of attitudes and subjective norms on behavioural intention.

- **TAM (Technology Acceptance Model):** To understand how perceived usefulness or perceived ease of use influence the acceptance of technology.

1.11 Summary

This chapter introduced the study by outlining the background, problem statement, purpose, objectives, hypotheses, significance, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and key terms guiding the research. It established that consumer behaviour toward skin-bleaching products in Zimbabwe is shaped by a combination of cultural, social, psychological, and digital factors, particularly religiosity, Ubuntu values, aspirational social status, influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes toward colourism. The chapter further showed that these factors are important in understanding consumer bleaching engagement and purchase intention within the Zimbabwean digital marketing context. Having presented the foundation and direction of the study, the next chapter reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature supporting the research variables and proposed relationships.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines both theory and empirical literature related to religiousness, Ubuntu principles, aspirational status that is, the desired status of individuals on social media platforms such as TikTok (TikTok algorithm) and the authenticity of influencers the experience of these elements have a direct influence on consumers levels of engagement with skin whitening products or skin lightening products and purchase intentions within Zimbabwe. This chapter establishes a foundation for the conceptual framework required to understand consumer behaviour related to skin bleaching consumption in digital environments through identifying how consumers are influenced by cultural or social norms, social context, influencers, and the digital marketplace. Additionally, this chapter identifies an important gap in the literature where relatively few studies combine African cultural constructs with the impact of current digital marketplaces on understanding skin bleaching related consumer behaviour.

2.1 Theoretical review

2.1.1 Overarching theories: Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) Ajzen (1991), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Davis (1989), and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)

The theoretical foundation behind this research was supported through the integration of three established theories of consumer behaviour, that is, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The research used a multi-theoretical framework as opposed to a unidimensional theoretical framework to better understand the complex relationship between the psychological, cultural, social, and technological influences that shape how consumers perceive and intend to purchase skin bleaching products after seeing them on TikTok. An integrated theoretical approach was more relevant to the complexity and multidimensionality inherent in the construct being examined because social, cultural, and technological influences all play a role in determining how and why consumers develop intentions, how social norms impact consumer behaviours, how cultural learning influences consumer behaviour, and how consumers interact with an online platform governed by algorithms. Today's consumers, particularly those operating in digital ecosystems, cannot be understood through one simple theoretical perspective, rather, they are impacted by internal attitudes toward a product, external social pressures related to the use of the product, and technological characteristics of the

platform being used to access the product (Venkatesh, Thong and Xu, 2012; Dwivedi et al., 2021). In addition, TikTok is designed to be both interactive and curated algorithmically based on end user actions, as well as to take into account both the cognitive process of the individual as well as the user interface and user experience of the platform and the social visibility of an individual action. Because of this interaction between these factors calls for a robust theoretical coherence, and by combining the TPB (Theory of Planned Behaviour), the TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) and the TRA (Theory of Reasoned Action) the Researcher was able to explore how the behavioural intention, technological acceptance and social influence come together to define digital consumer behaviour.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was developed by Ajzen in 1991 as a way of predicting intentional behaviour across multiple scenarios. According to TPB, the three primary elements that influence an individual's intention to act in a certain way are: (1) the person's view of the actions that they are going to take (attitude), (2) the views of people around them about whether it is socially acceptable for them to act that way (subjective norms), and (3) whether the person believes they have the ability to complete that task (perceived behavioural control). The TPB model will serve as a strong foundation for analysing how TikTok users in Zimbabwe develop their intentions to watch and purchase skin bleaching products.

Significantly, The Theory of Planned Behaviour can be used in a digitally mediated context in which repeated exposure to content forms attitudes, social interactions and endorsements from influencers influence subjective norms, and access to information and product availability creates perception of control over behaviour (Hajli, 2015; De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017). For example, and particularly relevant to the constructs that were reviewed in the empirical review (attitudes toward colourism, authenticity of influencers, and engagement of consumers), behaviours such as liking, commenting or sharing content are behavioural expressions that mediate the relationship between intention and behaviour. Therefore, the attitudinal and normative components of TPB are applicable to the constructs identified in the current literature. In addition, TikTok's algorithmic exposure heightens familiarity with and perceived ease of doing business through repeated exposure to the brand/product in question. Therefore, TPB (Theory of Planned Behaviour) defines how intentions are developed; plus, it provides a framework for connecting cultural factors, social influences and digital platform interaction modalities to the resulting behaviours exhibited by consumers.

The **Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)** developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) is a complement to the Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) providing a narrower focus on the explanation of behavioural intention as impacted by attitude and subjective norm. According to TRA, Behaviour is within the control of the individual and has an emphasis on the processes reasoned evaluation and social influence in decision making (Sheppard, Hartwick and Warshaw, 1988). TRA is relevant to this study in that the use of skin whitening products and engagement with skin whitening content is a visible behaviour, therefore subject to evaluation and approval from other social actors.

TRA also provides valuable information about how social validation and collective beliefs affect behaviour intentions. For example, subjective norms are enhanced in digitally networked environments (TikTok) by using visible metrics of social approval such as, likes, shares, and comments that alter an individual's decision (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Empirical variables such as, Ubuntu values, aspirational social status/influence use, authenticity of an influencer reflect socially embedded beliefs and norms, thus supporting the relationships among these variables. TRA offers another argument as to why attitudes on colourism are critical to shaping intentions; as an individual decides how to evaluate a skin bleaching practice, their beliefs about social acceptance and beauty appearance will affect how they evaluate that practice. TRA is still helpful in understanding the influence of subjective norms and attitudes on intention; however, TRA does not assume, in the way TPB does, that perceived behaviour control directly affects intentions, which helps define reasoned behaviour in culturally and socially sensitive contexts.

Davis (1989) created the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which provides a theoretical base that adds to the understanding of consumer behaviour by describing how technology as a factor influences an individual's perception of a product. The Theory of Technology Acceptance Model states that Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use influence an individual's attitude about using a technology and their intention to use it. As it pertains to the use of TikTok, the Technology Acceptance Model will aid in developing an understanding of the way TikTok users have adopted TikTok as both a medium through which to consume content and to discover products. TikTok can be seen as both an active environment for the user and a passive form of communication. TikTok's algorithmic curation, personalised recommendations, and interactive features actively shape user behaviour. The usefulness of the application is related to its ability to provide users with useful information about beauty, product reviews, and social proof. On the other hand, ease of use indicates

how easily users can navigate and interact with TikTok's content. These two factors increase the time users spend on TikTok by providing them with exposure to relevant content, which ultimately influences their attitudes toward and intentions to use TikTok (Alalwan et al., 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2021). TAM provides a direct theoretical connection between TikTok's users' perceived effectiveness for providing relevant content through the algorithmic exposure of TikTok's users and TikTok's users' reliance on TikTok's algorithms for product recommendations. Additionally, based on the findings of the empirical evidence review, user acceptance of TikTok as a favourable platform for finding beauty content and engaging with it is a large contributor to engagement levels on TikTok. Therefore, the use of TAM provides additional context for how technology influences consumer behaviour.

Combining TPB, TRA, and TAM through employing theory triangulation adds a considerable level of analytical depth to this study and enhances its ability to provide explanatory power regarding research questions. Theory triangulation allows researchers to examine the relationships between individual cognition, social influence, cultural values, and technological systems, thus providing ways for researchers to overcome the limitations of using one theoretical approach to study a phenomenon (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Dwivedi et al., 2021). The TPB provides insight into attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape intention to behave and behaviour engagement. The TRA emphasises the role that social influence and evaluative beliefs have on forming intentions. The TAM takes into account the technological environment in which an individual interacts with the system, and how the technological system contributes to the user's ability to achieve their desired outcomes.

The integrated framework lays a solid groundwork for the empirical areas of the study. For instance, constructs like religiosity and Ubuntu values have a strong connection to subjective norms due to their cultural roots and moral frameworks that shape behaviours. Factors relating to social status and level of influencer authenticity contribute to both subjective norms and attitudes, as they shape how individuals view desirability and social validation. When users use TikTok and are exposed to algorithmic content, their perception of their ability to control their own behaviours and their use of technology are impacted by their awareness of TikTok's algorithms making their content more available and easier to interact with. There is a direct correspondence between attitudes towards colourism, and the attitudinal component of Theories of Planned Behavior (TPB) and consumer engagement exemplifies the behaviour of individuals based on their intention in a digital context.

Ultimately, the combination of all these different constructs is intended to predict consumers' purchase intention as the final outcome of all the above-mentioned constructs.

Theoretical concepts, or constructs, being specifically integrated into empirical variables (or truths) ensure that there is a consistency between the theoretical base of the study and the physical research done. The integration of all three forms of theoretical concepts that is, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)) provides a comprehensive and contextually appropriate explanation of consumer behaviours regarding skin lightening content on TikTok in Zimbabwe. This clearly provides additional support for the robustness of this study, the development of a solid conceptual model, and strengthens the study's contribution to both academic literature and the practical understanding of digitally mediated consumer behaviours.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Religiosity

Religiosity refers to the extent to which individuals internalise and enact religious beliefs, values and rituals and the way in which these beliefs affect their attitudes, perceptions and behaviour (Worthington et al., 2003; Minton and Cabano, 2024). It covers both intrinsic religiosity in the form of personal beliefs and deeper beliefs in a specific faith, and extrinsic religiosity: in the form of observable practices like joining religious groups and doing communal rituals.

Religious attitudes on products consumers accept and why they do so are highly important from an empirical standpoint. Religiosity, according to recent studies, is associated with moral values and thus is linked to consumer behaviour by guiding people on whether certain products, services, and marketing messages will be accepted (Hanzaee and Zare, 2011; Jamshidi and Zarei, 2018). Consumers who are religious do not necessarily purchase according to conventional values but rather evaluate and consider whether they align with their beliefs (with some cases also showing evidence of consumer indifference). In the beauty and appearance field, it has been proven that modesty, humility, and natural beauty might affect people's opinions on cosmetic enhancement.

Religiosity is key in the creation of mass media consumption and engagement patterns online. This is supported by evidence that shows that they choose what content they consume more strictly and avoid material that is considered vanity, materialism or unrealistic beauty ideals (Minton and Cabano,

2024). Religion and persuasive messages can influence more than simply being promoted via media, in the forms most people use, such as TikTok.

Studies show that religious institutions strongly contribute to how people think about morality in the context of consumption through cultural norms (Mupunga and Chuchu, 2021). So, not only their shopping behaviour but their attitudes toward other social aspects, such as beauty standards and identity orientation, are heavily influenced by their religion. But the relationship between religiosity and consumer behaviour is complex, if not even all too restrictive.

Religious faith may hold a door closed for individuals to spend on items that are perceived as vanity and for appearing noble or good that way, but studies have demonstrated that religiosity is best compatible with buying when they are marketed as good for health, for the self, or in other words for others to improve themselves or self-improvement; it has been found that religiosity can be most compatible with contemporary buying habits. In traditional religious settings the rules for consumers would be tighter, prohibiting them from interacting with beauty content. That's because if religion limits someone to do the right thing, then what we buy and how we think of such faith with our day-to-day life does.

More precisely, religious faith may give birth to complex feelings around what people see online in addition to religious belief. Some beauty-based activities may seem perfectly normal to people, yet religious faith can provide a counterbalance, it forms a basis for understanding such material, or at least a means of translating this into something that they embrace or reject when it is the right thing to look up and say or do.

In this study, religiosity is one of the factors that shape people's perceptions of the genuineness of influencers, the content that is being provided by algorithms, and how they perceive colourism. In the end, religious belief becomes both the primary behavioural and cultural ground that informs some forms of online shopping habits. And that is what people think of skin lightening: an ethical issue with a lot of emotions about skin lightening when the ethical and moral climate can lead them to the shopping that is being promoted by algorithms and the media.

2.2.2 Ubuntu Values

Ubuntu values come from African philosophical teachings and emphasise being connected, group identity, and the welfare of everyone, as summarised in the statement that "a person is a person through other persons" (Mbiti, 1969; Tutu, 1999, Mutsonziwa, 2020). This lens emphasises the need for social peace, kindness, mutual respect, and accountability at a level which all must live up to.

Research suggests that Ubuntu values have a substantial impact on how people shop in Africa. Experiences with Ubuntu and their related philosophies reveal that people who embrace Ubuntu tend to put their own self-interest, culture, and community first (Iwu and Eze, 2016; Munthali and Mvula, 2019). People guided by Ubuntu are more inclined to support companies and advertisements that reflect community principles, responsible behaviour, and cultural heritage.

In online advertising, Ubuntu values are fundamental and can shape how consumers see and reflect on what influencers are posting. African consumers tend to value trust in relationships, genuineness, and being part of the community in online communications (Chinomona and Maziriri, 2017). Influencers who are sincerely socially concerned, culturally aware, and genuine with their followers are perceived to be trustworthy.

Ubuntu values have a big influence on people on social media interactions. Because Ubuntu values promote community bonding and shared experiences, they tend to relate more to content that resonates with the community as well and reflects group standards. With posts such as a better future will be derived from their communities, what they believe to be good for the community.

So, people's interactions might in general have more to do with cultural and societal expectations from society and not being a consumer's choice and something that simply must come in a personal reaction to it. But how Ubuntu affects consumer habits is not fixed. The increasing influence of globalisation worldwide and media in every country that comes into play on the internet means shoppers can no longer think only about what other shops and brands are selling, whether it is their own brand or what other companies offer, but what would work and why. Unlike other studies that argue there is little to no major harm to the Ubuntu values that Ubuntu represents, and that Ubuntu is still the most relevant way for consumer value (Moyo and Adebayo, 2020), Ubuntu is a kind of globalised cultural framework, which continues to evolve all the time as society, economy, and technology shift along changing trends.

For beauty and skincare practitioners, Ubuntu values could make a difference in their opinion on what skin lightening is and is not. For one thing, certain shoppers may be attracted to aspirational and global standards of beauty; others may judge these activities based on community views and cultural identity. The relationship between group identity and individual goals comes under some strain; tradition and modernity relate, as generations of people will have to come to terms with the same kind of issues.

The presence of Ubuntu might also have consequences for how genuine an influencer seems. Public figures that conform to community values, value inclusion, and are held to social accountability are generally viewed more positively. Influencers that propagate harmful or socially toxic practices, in contrast, may not be viewed well by fans inspired by Ubuntu principles. Ubuntu principles are an important cultural context for consumers interacting, viewing online content, or seeing images and ideas to be appreciated in terms of colourism and beauty, and it is a key lesson for consumers in what they do with brands and also how they respond to advertisements online and how the community should know this according to Ubuntu principles.

2.2.3 Aspirational Social Status

The desire to attain a higher social position refers to the aspiration of individuals to move up in society and to represent themselves as part of a higher social class by purchasing items that signify prestige, success, and appeal (Eastman et al., 1999; Truong et al., 2010). All of our spending is based on status-driven purchasing in which we buy things not just for their practical use but to convey our identity, our social status, and our achievements.

Research shows the huge impact that the desire for social status has on buying behaviour in general, especially in online societies in the modern world (Eastman et al., 1999). People with a strong desire for status want items that are luxurious, elegant, and attractive, as they are perceived to be aspirational assets. This habit is also affected in the symbolic sense: purchasing something and feeling successful with it represents something more than happiness for the individual. As we engage with social media more frequently, people's purchasing appetite on a day-to-day basis is growing while the online world is all around us, and it seems to be in the service of promotion. People are seeing well-designed views of rich and successful individuals daily on the internet, showcasing the best in beauty, life, and living in a city with all these expectations. It is believed that such exposure does cause people to consider themselves in relation to social expectations and perform as they wish to (Hajli, 2015). This practice

puts more significance on the notions of who they want to be in their minds, so people engage with content that represents who they wish to be in society.

Aspirational social status can also affect consumption and even take place through engagement patterns. People working to reach a higher social status are more likely to connect with aspirational qualities of products - luxury branding, beauty transformation, and lifestyle-like imagery (Truong et al., 2010). In doing so, this interaction heightens the attractiveness of the product in mind and the likelihood of choices made in association with aspirational purposes. While aspirational social status is not in itself the main point of concern, there is more to the point-altered view on how it might result in unrealistic expectations and psychological stress for someone who might want to make change (Birhanu and Yimer, 2018). Achieving aspirational characteristics, such as beauty, tends to bring in (for those involved) a narrow and aspirational concept of attractiveness. On the other hand, some say aspirational consumption motivates people's engagement and social advancement (Chikafu and Chinomona, 2022). So, aspirational content in particular does not just put pressure on an individual but also provides them the motivation for thinking about their career and goals. And that is because the aspirational social status is a dual force: it drives consumption but at the same time underpins social inequality in a way that is impossible to ignore in our daily lives at one end of the spectrum - which is to say, it is very much a concept in which aspiration is all we know about social difference and where one person has it.

In African contexts, including Zimbabwe, the aspirational social status is influenced by local cultural ideas and global media. Young people have a lot of exposure to global beauty expectations and think lighter skin is associated only with success (Birhanu and Yimer, 2018) and what is good lives now. Such exposure may help in internalising those ideals and might shape opinions on beauty practices such as skin bleaching and affect people's identities and social positioning.

At the same time, aspirational tendencies interface with cultural frames like Ubuntu: one of group identity and collective well-being. Thus, there is a tension between individualistic aspirations and community values while also illustrating how much consumers can negotiate in hybrid cultural contexts. For many consumers that are experiencing digital beauty, aspirational social status plays an important role in the way consumers relate to them. It is a sign of aspirants' perspective on algorithm-driven products, even that of those who believe in colourism. Ultimately, aspirational social status is

of supreme importance for consumer participation and purchase (as it is in digitalised life) in a world characterised by constant fighting between identities and social status as a whole, for no reason but so much as it demands us to do a little.

2.2.4 Influencer Authenticity

Real influencer authenticity refers to social media influencers being shown as authentic, credible, transparent and trustworthy in communicating and endorsing (Audrezet et al., 2020; Lou and Yuan, 2019). The key ones that impact audiences are sincerity, honesty and consistency (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Many research studies have shown that authenticity is instrumental in influencing influencer marketing effectiveness. The authenticity of products and audiences as well as that of professionals in general helps to build trust with and a willingness to support brands and is better when the content does not have to be scripted or artificially curated so it comes across as genuine (Ki and Kim, Djafarova and Rushworth, 2019). This means that authenticity increases the power to influence through endorsements by dampening skepticism and restoring trust and confidence in people's opinions.

Authenticity also allows influencers to reach their audiences emotionally if they reach the audience. People, according to research, do tend to form parasocial relationships (one-sided and trust-based) with influencers. This ties to the influencer, therefore becoming easier for them to influence and retain their followers in the future when they are not as far from celebrities or followers as they are today.

So, authenticity is not a cognitive evaluation of credibility but more so an emotional basis for the engagement which is good quality messaging of digital marketing messages in general. However, authenticity is in fact being challenged in contemporary digital environments. Advertisers and payments to influencers are now more transparent, and viewers recognise the commercial element of the endorsements (Evans et al., 2017). For instance, because influencer endorsements can often have a deceptive image and have a high level of engagement. As they find influencer content to be overly scripted or profit-driven, their responders might not trust someone with them for a whole minute even when they see them endorsing it.

In contrast, other authors say that people are already starting to adopt the commercial nature of influencer marketing and would accept a good deal of sales but still think that influencers are still authentic on sponsorship for all sides with transparency and honesty (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). For these reasons, authenticity is not a fixed attribute but a socially constructed perception, shaped by both influencer behaviour and audience expectations. Authenticity has a high value in African digital cultures as trust, relational interactions, and community values are central, and people in these places align with it. In fact, audiences have a lot more faith in people who are social activists but are able to relate to that culture and their experiences which have a relationship in place with the same (Nyoni and Zindi, 2023). The impact of celebrity influencers is most effective with cultural awareness and authenticity, which will enhance credibility and foster engagement.

Authenticity is of particular importance in the beauty and skincare industries. That is where the trust factor is of utmost importance, we see people reaching out to such influencers frequently for product reviews, tutorials and recommendations for products as well as recommendations which are high-grade for consumers. As such, skin-bleaching products are seen as being authentic, which affects people's perception of how and what products are available to them, evaluating their effectiveness while deciding whether they will purchase marketed products or others. Influencer authenticity is one of the key factors in the trust and engagement of people on social media (with confidence) and to trust, interact and make decisions in digital spaces of this study.

2.2.5 TikTok Algorithmic Exposure

TikTok algorithmic exposure is defined as personalised delivery and prioritisation of content based on individual interactions online (De Vries et al., 2020; Bucher, 2018). By the recommendation system itself, that picks and chooses and shows content to appear on our feed. So, using it, even with that information in hand, people intuitively feel something in digital and act in the area of what information on what information and why.

Researchers say algorithmic exposure is what underlies consumer awareness, perception, and behaviour in our digital world. Based on an ongoing analysis of likes, shares, watch times, and search histories of users (Kaye et al., 2021), TikTok serves different types of content based on user preferences and interests. An important consequence of algorithmic exposure is that it tends to boost people's trust in the content they are presented with (Cialdini, 2019). All of this eventually makes

brand products sound so great that you would want to see them often in line with how frequently you see them, with increased overall popularity over time.

The algorithm of TikTok has much to do with trendsetting and shaping the process by which consumers make decisions on beauty and skincare. Engagement rates were high in beauty-related content, as studies have indicated (Zulli and Zulli, 2020). The correlation between the impact of the algorithm on users' interactions and its very presence in beauty content, where users become participants and their feedback loop is embedded, will be a direct one.

This ongoing process of interaction and exposure remains a significant driver of digital marketing content, particularly in industries that rely heavily on visual appeal, such as beauty and cosmetics. However, algorithms do have limitations, and this might prevent users from fully engaging with the view; filtering by algorithms might also restrict users' views and their access to various sources (Noble, 2018). Because of the belief and bias in current data and the selection algorithms are taking into recommendation of certain types of content and ideas, algorithms may be creating 'filter bubbles' that are biased. Personalisation through algorithms is good for a better user experience in terms of more information than humans and better exploration of the content in one or two dimensions in one's mind (Bucher, 2018). This view also suggests that algorithms are effective in reducing information overload and making it quicker to find those things. Some evidence in the literature shows that algorithmic amplification of popular messages of beauty in general can perpetuate narrow and homogeneous beauty (such as colourist ideals and ideas in aesthetics) within society as well as between societies. Thus, by introducing algorithms to users of popular media, they not only form a representative of their preferences but can shape the users' perception of attractiveness, desirability, and social standards of beauty. The advent of digital tools in the African context has intensified the influence of algorithmic exposure on youth culture and consumer behaviour. In Zimbabwe, young consumers are seeing the recommendations provided through TikTok (which is the main platform) on beauty trends and product promotions is very influential in influencing the attitude toward skin bleaching. Finally, TikTok algorithmic exposure is a powerful form of technological tool that facilitates and enhances digital experiences, marketing messages, attracts, culture, or perception in consumer.

2.2.6 Attitudes Toward Colourism

Attitudes to colourism refer to the beliefs, perceptions, and evaluations regarding differences in skin tones and the effects of those differences on preferences for skin tone, and their social, cultural, and economic meanings (Hunter 2007; Glenn, 2008). Colourism is a form of intra-group discrimination in which lighter skin tones are given a more privileged status (for example in the social good market or even a superior group in a competitive market or in the world). This has been demonstrated in a great deal of research that in communities of colonialism (for example Asia-Pacific civilisation, colonisation, globalisation) with darker skin, it can seriously affect an individual's perception of who and what they feel like so that they may feel unqualified, and in many other economic circumstances. It has also been found in all research that people are much more likely to be more attracted to fair-skinned people and to better status for a skin tone in life, who appear pretty on a different skin, and what you expect and find for them in a beauty product and to have a stronger skin tone/ beauty/cosmetic product at a more suitable point when compared to darker skin or different skin tones or skin on oneself.

In Africa, colourism proves to be a current issue. Scholars posit that colonialism and contemporary global media factors underlie the beauty standards for lighter skin (Charles, 2018). This, therefore, can be a major driver for skin bleaching products since it can be applicable to many other people. Such dynamics are also culturally rooted in Zimbabwe and the global online beauty narrative over time. Colourism has not gained universal acceptance but is under challenge from a very broad and diverse front. People continue with the perception that lighter skin represents social superiority, while other work confirms the ever-increasing use of alternative aesthetics that promote natural beauty and cultural awareness (Moyo and Adebayo, 2020). Beauty standards developed globally continue to be pushed on the platform and media outlets; digital activism has also brought about people's resistance. On the other hand, while much of global media is guilty of promoting Eurocentric beauty standards, people from Africa have begun to critique and challenge those standards by promoting diversity and cultural expression.

But it is clear that colourism and culture have a consistent relationship and that our attitudes toward colourism are changing because of history (culture is influenced by colourism) and as users are influenced by digital. People with coloured skin also tend to want more of it, such as video or influencer endorsements of skin-lightening products as well. In such cases, they get more likes and comments back and more likes, which increases visibility and spread of the type of content. People

who do not live in colour communities do take these kinds of colourist values and do fight the beauty world. It further explains that using colourism aware content is not necessarily acceptance; it is resistance and social critique because of the multiplicity of digital and social contexts.

Repeated exposure to beauty content through content and algorithm-based platforms like TikTok can lead to positive attitudes towards colourism. They showed through empirical evidence that repeated exposure to similar models of attractiveness makes the skin feel more familiar and normal and thus leads to better perception of the quality and desirability of beauty. And so is the mere exposure effect that repeated exposure encourages acceptance and preference (Cialdini, 2019).

But the digital marketing of colourism also has ethical and social fears about how these values can be reinforced since some people think that algorithmic reinforcement of certain aesthetic ideas (for example, beauty values) will only further lead to the normalisation of problematic moral standards in society and inequitable practices and treatment (Noble 2018). In the light of such anxieties, social media is a contested site through which two narratives vie in shaping the relationship between the mainstream and colourist ideology. For our purposes in this research, however, attitude toward colourism is relevant, as it is a key factor that influences how people will approach beauty or the viewing of beauty content (online or offline) in a digital manner with regard to skin colour or skin bleaching. We view psychology and culture as just one of the many forces that shape behaviour and the actions we take in response to such behaviours, and with our digital environment, these experiences shape people and therefore that is increasingly the nature of consumer psychology that shapes those people's social behaviour and conduct.

2.2.7 Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement is conceptualised as the degree of cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment a consumer has with a brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2019) It is more than passive gazing and involves participation, interactive activity and even some form of real-world relation. Could be in internet culture, how you get to know or share more of the facts about a certain brand and product on a personal level with the individual or an organisation.

It is thought that the consumer's involvement is vitally relevant in the perspective of digital marketing effectiveness. Experienced consumers who are emotionally engaged to brands, have a good memory, and are loyal to these brands are more likely to participate in their growth (Liang et al., 2024). And

so, in the case of digital marketing, engagement is not just about individual conduct, but deeper psychological engagement expressed in all psychological activity. And judgements are made on the consumer's part.

Social media engagement is more dynamic since it is where not only the followers of the content providers are on their website but also the users are creators of their content for their community (Hajli, 2015) so that with such a participatory culture, users may create meaning together, learn about users directly, communicate and interact with them on video debates, and more so that as a result most of them find material to promote online. Empirical research demonstrates, however, a clear proof of a substantial association between engagement and algorithmic prominence for digital media. This results in increased interaction and therefore more attention for the item and/or channel (De Vries et al., 2020). This generates a self-reinforcing cycle – engagement leads to more visibility, which leads to further engagement. A feedback loop that fuels success for digital content, particularly in visually orientated, trend-focused areas like beauty and skincare.

But the engagement is not across the board on all issues. Positive engagement (likes or shares) is generally seen on material and marketing, but there can also be negative or critical engagement with disagreement and pessimism about the promotion of products (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Engagement is therefore the manifestation of the contact with the content or the owners of the brand on support and feedback (both positive, not merely critical). The perception of the digital activity and being exposed to it (Hajli, 2015; Liang et al., 2024) is a vital nexus between customer engagement and behaviour. Research has shown that engagement with material (seen or read) over time can help build trust and reduce uncertainty, in order to help get consumers interested in browsing and buying products (Hajli, 2015). Engagement is in a sense the bridge between awareness and action, turning passive exposure into active consumer behaviour.

For skin bleaching products, the engagement of the user is related to how much you like or dislike the product. That said, engagement, and more engagement in personal interaction, through social media, can promote a product and make that business good for their sale. Thus, customer connection is the key factor that changes the behaviours of online customers, as consumer contact is the primary place that social media influences purchasing intent.

2.2.8 Purchasing intentions

Purchase intention is the willingness or intention of a person to buy a product or service due to attitudes, perceptions and previous experiences (Ajzen, 1991; Dodds et al., 1991). It is one of the most important outcome variables in the study of the behaviour of consumers. It is well known to be an important predictor of purchase behaviour.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour has been scientifically validated as the basis of buying intention in a financial sense. The theory suggests that individual's attitude towards the activity, the perception of its own behaviour and anticipation of social approval that a given behaviour or the knowledge or expectation of such behaviour has, are all determinants of behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). Research shows that consumers with a positive attitude in general towards a product, social acceptance and the notion that they can purchase the product have a likely high purchase intention. Especially the digital environments link the purchase intention to product information and online interactions. Studies have shown that when a person is regularly exposed to relevant knowledge about these things, they perceive it as easier to make a purchase and they are more confidence with the goods (Dodds et al., 1991).

Influencer marketing has been one of the strong predictors of purchase intention in digital society. As they are viewed as legitimate, credible and trustworthy, people tend to accept the advice and purchase the promoted products (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Peer-to-peer connections and trust are becoming more important in shaping consumption intents and habits. The more often a buyer encounters his or her items in public, the more he or she is inclined to buy them (Cialdini, 2019). The feeling of people with frequent attention and social approval can be "We are buying those products for every one of us" and even a desire for that brand. Smart suggestions not only enhance awareness of the products but also a higher level of legitimacy and attractiveness.

But the reason for purchasing does not simply originate from digital exposure and social surrounds. Other psychological and contextual factors that make a difference include self-perception, cultural attitudes and economic situations (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In the Zimbabwean context perhaps, it is the cultural aspects of spirituality and Ubuntu that influence the consumer's idea of beauty and what people tend to buy. Consumer engagement has also been identified as a key driver of purchase intention. People display positive attitudes toward purchase when they participate in product-related content activities (Liang et al., 2024). Engagement increases knowledge and emotional connection, and therefore the relationship between exposure and intention.

Intention is related to activity, of course, but intention does not always lead to purchase (Hollebeek et al., 2019). There is the potential for an intention-behaviour gap in information and items that can be driven by customer preferences and apply with costs or accessibility. The aim of skin lightening products is that consumers are ready to use the products whether through the use of internet media or social media or not and what the aesthetics of the products are. This is the final step of the consumer decision making process and this is where behavioural decision-making processes and technology meet on an emotional, social and product level.

2.3 Contextual review: Global, African and Zimbabwean perspectives on skin bleaching/colourism products

2.3.1 Global overview of skin bleaching products

Skin bleaching products are also called skin-lightening or skin-tone boosting cosmetics. They decrease the melanin in the skin. They are used for skin whitening. European colonisation and social class divisions were prevalent in colonies where the wealth and attractiveness derived from light skin. In spite of this, the demand for bleaching products has grown over the past two decades: in spite of the world changing beauty culture in terms of beauty standards, media and marketing for cosmetics that made them the industry's biggest sellers. The idea has become a beauty tradition in many civilisations and so has implications for cosmetic consumption today. The global beauty industry has leveraged this principle in the innovation of various forms of skin-lightening products and the implementation of Digital Marketing/Influencer campaigns in the marketing of these skin-lightening products. Internationally, cosmetic companies commonly use social media influencers to present the application of their products and spread their beauty standards. Such marketing has facilitated the connection of a large number of consumers with beauty products on various digital media. Thus, the global skin lightening market is still increasing since digital marketing, and social media are continuously increasing the exposure of consumers to new beauty trends.

Skin lightening products are used for a variety of cultural reasons. For instance, as Glenn (2008) and Charles (2018) note, in some Asian cultures, having lighter skin is considered to be beautiful and flawless because it is a sign of youth, so many women use skin lightening cosmetics. In the West, skin lighteners may be driven by beauty, fashion, or celebrities marketing items through advertising or endorsements, say researchers. According to Charles (2018), colourism has become a global problem due to historical discrimination, notions perpetuated by the media, and the desire for these products by consumers. Ideal of beauty is more accessible than ever and also easier to spread with

the help of social media sites like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. They have allowed beauty influencers and experts to shape the customer perception of beauty products and to drive consumers' engagement with beauty-related content (Hajli, 2015). In other words, the online world has become the primary place where consumers find out about new beauty products and become interested in buying them.

Unethical practices and skin whitening products continue to fill the global market and are still in high demand, and health professionals are worried about skin bleaching/whitening with toxic compounds like mercury/hydroquinone. Therefore, governments and international organizations have to develop policies against unsafe cosmetics. Many cultural organizations have trained women to respect and love their natural beauty and to be confident about their natural beauty and self-esteem and rejected conventional notions of whiteness being nice. They consider the cons of skin lightening products to be bad. And those are not the only reasons that people want skin lightening products. So understanding a product from such perspective is key to understanding the behavior of consumers in the digital sector.

2.3.2 Skin bleaching products in Africa

In Africa, historical, cultural and socio-economic factors have all affected the development of skin-bleaching products (Charles 2018). Colonial histories and racial hierarchies created a perception that lighter skin tones were used to demonstrate social privilege and economic opportunity (Hunter 2007). As time passed, it became clear that this perception has impacted beauty standards in many African societies. Research suggests that such products are being highly consumed in a majority of African countries including Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Senegal (Charles 2018), the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Emphasis is mine). Users typically believe that lighter skin is attractive and would allow them to pursue careers and have a more favourable perception among the general public. In this respect, skin-bleaching products are still a major industry in African cosmetic product markets.

Several studies have investigated the motivations for skin bleaching practices in Africa. Study by Charles (2018) found that many South African consumers equate lighter skin with greater socially mobility and attractiveness. Similarly, Hunter (2007) found that peer and media influences were strong determinants of consumer's attitudes towards skin tone in West Africa. Social media has created even more avenues through which these influences can be disseminated as people exchange

beauty trends and cosmetic application techniques through these platforms with their peers. In addition, many influencers and celebrities endorse beauty regimens that include the use of skin lightening products, which therefore affect consumers' perceptions of attractiveness. The proliferation of these endorsements has resulted in enhanced consumer engagement with beauty themed digital content in African markets.

Some African scholars have also noted that counter stories are emerging that are rooted in Africa and the beauty of nature, as well (Charles, 2018). Digital societies and movements that espouse self-acceptance and celebrate culture have encouraged people to drop colourism and love anyone and everyone. Much of the online discussion of skin tone highlights these conflicting attitudes too: many users tend to be positive on skin lightening products while other users are pro-African skin. Such discussions highlight how society from other perspectives is taking over how the masses perceive beauty practices in Africa.

2.3.3 Skin bleaching/colourism products in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the usage of skin lightening cosmetics has been accompanied by the increasing proliferation of digital media and global beauty markets (Mupunga and Chuchu, 2021). Young adults are particularly influenced as they are exposed to numerous global beauty trends through social media such as TikTok and Instagram where influencers showcase their beauty regime and cosmetic goods as they deem fit. They may affect ideas about how attractive someone can be as well as what beauty products will make them more attractive. Exposure to these beauty regimens has been a powerful technique to market skin lightening goods as well having many users comment about them.

Studies have indicated that social identity, societal factors and cultural perceptions of "beauty" have a significant effect on consumer behaviour on cosmetics in Zimbabwe (Chinomona and Maziriri, 2017). Beauty items are not just utilitarian but are often perceived by users as symbolic representations of their identities and how they portray themselves to others. In addition, social media is a place where customers talk about beauty practices and their experiences with cosmetic items. In the case of conversations on digital media platforms, it is the consumers that create and define their own criteria of beauty and decide what works for a product. Hence, the way consumers engage online strongly influences consumer behavior towards skin-lightening goods.

Additionally, Zimbabwe's cultural practices like Ubuntu and religious practices continue to shape customer preferences of cosmetic/beauty products and what they will likely do with their digital marketing experience and their acceptance of cosmetic influencer endorsements (Mutsonziwa, 2020). Community conversations on the acceptance of various types/qualities of cosmetics are some of the cultural aspects that will influence how consumers receive digital marketing messages or endorsements from influencers. Religious traditions can also provide a source of moral criteria for people to judge different types/qualities of cosmetics. Hence, it is important to understand the role of culture when examining consumers' interactions with skin-lightening/cosmetics brands in Zimbabwe. Complementary Analysis of Skin Bleaching Trends in Zimbabwe and the Impact of Digital Marketing (Published December 2020)

2.4 Hypotheses Development

2.4.1 Religiosity and influencer authenticity

Religiosity is very important in each context of communication in terms of credibility and authenticity. Minton and Cabano (2024) stated that doctrines of religion promote truthfulness, sincerity, and good conduct. Thus, they influence the judgment of people on what to believe and who to trust as sources of information and as public figures. Opinion leaders are generally viewed as influencers in social media marketing and their recommendations for products can have a strong impact on consumer attitudes and behavior (Audrezet et al.,2020). Thus, religious consumers could assess the trustworthiness of social media influencers based on their own belief system concerning moral integrity and transparency. According to Audrezet et al. (2020), consumers will believe in influencers on social media if they prove to be authentic. Ki and Kim (2019) further emphasised that authenticity develops emotional relationships between online influencers and their audiences, and in turn raises the trustworthiness of product endorsements. However, other experts have warned that these promotional messages, which are sometimes so commercialized and false, may cause religious buyers to mistrust the recommendations made by the influencers (Hanzaee and Zare 2011). The level of religiousness of the followers of an influencer for beauty products will therefore define how authentic they can be perceived.

Empirical research that shows that religious people have positive opinions of influencers that talk about moral ideals and social responsibility (Minton and Cabano, 2024). Then the consumers look at such influencers as more reputable and trustworthy in their recommendations of products. Some others suggest that extremely religious people are very wary of influencer endorsements as they see

the commercial promotion as potentially manipulative (Hanzaee and Zare, 2011) which does not make influencer marketing very effective among highly religious consumers. However, research reveals that authenticity is still a major driver of consumer interaction with influencer-created material (Audrezet et al., 2020). Influencers that are genuine and open will get more engagement from their followers and get them to heed their advice. When it comes to skin-whitening products, the legitimacy of these products could impact the consumer's faith in the influencer to promote such products. Therefore, it illustrates the need to recognise the influence of religiosity on the communication of an influencer and, consequently, customer sentiments. Such analysis yields the following hypothesis:

H_1a: Religiosity positively influences perceptions of influencer authenticity in the promotion of skin bleaching products.

2.4.2 Religiosity and TikTok algorithmic exposure

Religious views might also influence how a person interacts with content that is suggested by algorithms on platforms like TikTok. Algorithms take into consideration a person's history of interactions, viewing patterns, and preferences to adapt users experience and recommend new material (De Vries et al., 2020). This technology allows users to participate more, although the user's values and principles can alter how the user perceives suggested material. For example, religious people hold ethical and moral traits in the media they consume and are likely to influence how they engage with the media (Minton and Cabano, 2024). People with strong convictions will probably ignore any media they think promotes consumerism, vanity or false beauty. People who are strong in their opinions are likely to not engage positively with algorithmic recommendations for cosmetics. They may skip or gloss over beauty posts, businesses or beauty stuff altogether to align with their belief system, having some kind of spiritual belief system. Therefore, religious leanings may be a factor in an individual's reaction to algorithm-based beauty postings.

There is a lot of research on how individual values influence how people utilise digital media. Hajli (2015) revealed that consumers will utilise social media regularly depending on their values. Worthington et al.,2003) illustrated the way in which a person's religious beliefs affect their perception of advertising and consumer culture. This implies that exposure to an algorithm-based recommendation does not affect consumer actions, but instead personal beliefs can affect how consumers perceive and respond to recommendations. Religious individuals may engage with beauty content on TikTok differently than non-religious users due to their emphasis on moral or cultural

values in social media use. Hence, religion may influence the number of times customers engage with skin whitening goods recommended by algorithms. Understanding this relationship is important to work out digital advertising tactics that utilise algorithmic based digital marketing and consumer engagement strategies. Hence, all the arguments led to the development of a hypothesis.

H_1b: Religiosity significantly influences exposure to TikTok algorithmic content related to skin bleaching products.

2.4.3 Religiosity and Attitudes Toward Colourism

Religion plays a great role in our moral outlook, moral behavior, cultural habits and relationships with others. The teachings of religion may imply that humility, moral character and natural human condition are important to the body to make an individual feel beautiful, even according to a beauty artifice system such as the one so represented to our eyes (Minton and Cabano, 2024) which we understand by that. Given skin colourism is a cultural construct by others and Hunter (2007) argues that colourism comes as such only for humans within its society are we thought to be more beautiful and more beautiful, by the individuals with light skin or light skin colour have advantages for a larger number of people for higher privileges than darker people. But for most religions the religious ideas that we are all equal do not come from the religion, of colouring and society but are they from the teachings of the religion or the culture or what we believe would be. Therefore, those with religious faith may also think about beauty standards that can place more value on lighter skin than darker skin. They will also consider cosmetic practices in the context of their religion which have some moral and ethical weight in society (Hanzaee and Zare, 2011). One person may be unwilling to change their colour or natural appearance in order to be accepted by others as their religion holds on to them (for example, religious leaders tend to have the belief in good and evil people, and others support colourism and others have a negative perception of colourism as well (Worthington et al., 2003).

In the face of such discrimination there is a variety of evidence as to how religion and skin colourism affect the behavior of followers of the people whom people want to become aware. Religion seems to take an extreme view of skin colourism by calling to mind the idea that people are spiritually the same, every human being who is different always deserves to be treated fairly (Minton and Cabano 2024). From this perspective, people of faith would not accept colourism for the reasons of fairness and diversity-based beliefs. But other studies show that the religious groups that people are part of may unwittingly continue to support beauty notions and ideas by society based on social values of skin colour with no prior view of skin colour as a universal thing (Charles, 2018). For instance, the

preferences for beauty in marriage based on skin colour are often discussed in an entire community, thereby reinforcing the existing beauty standards associated with lighter skin. The impact of social media on these dynamics makes for a complicated process because individuals are exposed to religious messages, as well as global beauty standards, on social media, (Hajli 2015). Thus, individuals may face competing pressures or influences when forming their attitudes towards colourism. An analysis of the way in which religious values have a relationship with digital beauty aesthetic narratives is important in relation to understanding skin bleaching products. How religious consciousness impacts upon the extent to which consumers view lighter skinned ideals positively or negatively provide the basis for the further research hypothesis that follows;

H_1c: Religiosity significantly influences attitudes toward colourism.

2.4.4 Ubuntu Values and Influencer Authenticity

Ubuntu refers to an African philosophy focusing on the nature of relationships and the nature of community (Mutsonziwa, 2020).The essence of Ubuntu is that "I am because we are," which speaks to how interconnected people are with each other through their shared experiences and having mutual respect for one another; thus, it identifies people as a collective whole to which they all belong. To this end, Ubuntu supports open and honest communication; these values could impact on how people assess the credibility of digital influencers through social media. Through social media, digital influencers promote products and services by recounting their personal experiences with, and making their personal recommendations of, those products/services to their followers (Audrezet., et al 2020).In cultures where Ubuntu is valued, the expectation of followers towards digital influencers may be that they are sincere and have integrity in their communications. As such, followers who identify with the principles of Ubuntu will be more likely to view influencers who appear authentic and relatable to them as legitimate. On the other hand, they may also be more suspicious of influencers who appear overly commercial and lack ties to the communities in which they operate.

Studies suggest that authenticity is an important variable to consider when trying to establish consumer trust in influencer marketing (Ki and Kim, 2019). When an influencer appears to sincerely care about the welfare of their audience and utilises similar patterns in the way they communicate, the audience will be more likely to find them credible. According to Chinomona and Maziriri (2017), many African consumers place a high value on relational trust and community-based interactions when assessing marketing communication. This means that consumer's cultural values like Ubuntu will also affect how they interpret the actions of influencers. Social media discourse within

communities can also affect how participants interpret authenticity through social engagement with like-minded individuals who can collectively evaluate the promotional information being shared. These types of participant communications can reinforce everyone involved the shared expectations around ethical communications and responsible marketing practices. Influencers in relation to skin whitening products must be evaluated on whether their influence is consistent with community values and cultural identity. The discussion above emphasises the importance of understanding the relationship between values of Ubuntu and perceptions of authenticity within digital marketing environments. From this discussion, a hypothesis is developed**;**

H_2a: Ubuntu values positively influence perceptions of influencer authenticity.

2.4.5 Ubuntu values and TikTok Algorithmic Exposure

Digital media consumption may vary for users with an Ubuntu perspective (I am because we are). For example, Facebook and Twitter have algorithms that show content based on past likes or engagements with posts (De Vries, 2020). In communities where collective identity is valued more than individual identity, people will engage more in posting or sharing content about their friend groups. Because of the social and communal nature of an Ubuntu perspective, people respond to information considering their community and others' experiences and attitudes; thus, they will also share content about cosmetics and beauty that creates relationship building opportunities. Some TikTok videos are asking the viewers to comment and or share the videos with others who are also engaging with the TikTok content creation. Videos created on TikTok will also get better algorithmic exposure for that video because social platforms prioritize content that brings high user engagement. Cultural values will define how people use digital technologies and participate in online communities (Hajli, 2015). Research findings have indicated that, in African cultures, the use of social media and sharing of content is influenced by cultural values that stress the importance of communal living (Chinomona and Maziriri, 2017). Once they find the digital content they are in contact with to be related to their experience in the community, they will most probably take it up and share it with others.

This is a form of engagement that can enhance the exposure of content generators to the content that is being promoted through increased visibility within the user's social media network. On the other hand, content that goes against the user's communal value systems will have minimal engagement by users. In relation to debates on beauty practices and skin bleaching products, dialogue and engagement between users in a single community and their norms and expectations will collectively

influence the frequency with which they come across TikTok content related to beauty. Thus, it is posited that Ubuntu values will have an important impact on how much users are exposed to beauty content through algorithms. From the arguments above, the following hypothesis is thus advanced;
H_2b: Ubuntu values significantly influence TikTok algorithmic exposure to skin-bleaching content.

2.4.6 Ubuntu Values and Attitudes Toward Colourism

The concept of 'Ubuntu' can be described as an African philosophy which espouses that we are all connected to one another as a global community and therefore we all have a right to be treated with respect and consideration (Mutsonziwa, 2020). The philosophy of Ubuntu may influence attitudes toward colourism, as it promotes the rejection of beauty ideals based on skin tone or colour (Glenn, 2008). Colourism plays out socially through the establishment of hierarchical structures that value lighter skinned individuals over those with darker complexions and therefore do not reflect the egalitarian values of Ubuntu's philosophy. Those who strongly identify with Ubuntu's ideals may therefore also have a critical view toward the practice of colourism as they believe that the beauty standards created through the hierarchy favouring lighter skin are contradictory to the values of equality and mutual respect. As such, it is believed that Ubuntu's ideals would promote an acceptance of a broader interpretation of beauty; beyond just what is traditionally thought of as beautiful. Social media, as a medium for the discussion of identity, culture and beauty norms, may also be used to promote Ubuntu's ideals as they provide a space for the re-evaluation of beauty norms in relation to the various forms of beauty.

Cultural values greatly influence how people feel about themselves as they relate to beauty and appearance (Charles, 2018). In Africa, talking about beauty is usually tied to how a person connects their identity and self-worth to their culture. Authors like Glenn (2008) have pointed out that many of today's social movements to promote natural beauty are a reaction to colourism and colonial notions of beauty; these social movements challenge individuals to accept their true skin colour and reject the negative status given to individuals from colour hierarchy. Social media has helped these movements by providing a platform for users to share personal experiences and take on the dominant narratives of beauty. In Zimbabwe, people discuss colourism in terms of their cultural past and present which adds a new level of complexity due to competing global standards of beauty (Moyo and Adebayo, 2020). Ubuntu values encourage individuals to evaluate the merits of colour-based beauty hierarchies in favour of inclusive definitions of beauty. Given these findings, this research proposes the following hypothesis;

H_2c: Ubuntu values significantly influence attitudes toward colourism.

2.4.7 Aspirational social status and influencer authenticity

Individuals' desire to elevate their social standing and perceived status via lifestyle and consumption choices is termed aspirational social status (Eastman et al., 1999). Through examples of influencer behaviours, social media platforms portray aspirational lifestyles, which may change the audience's perceptions of the credibility of those influencers who are promoting specific products. Then, if someone wants to get a higher platform to do so, they are likely to see those who suggest aspirational lifestyles as all positive, also as more trustworthy in their product endorsement. Influencers try and present themselves as aspirational leaders and likeable characters on the road by leading the way and they encourage and support individuals to pursue the same social life. So in the end, the influencer will be able to influence their follower list to achieve social stature as that of the person that wants and wants it.

Studies of consumer reactions in celebrity and influencer endorsement reveal that people tend to be influenced by aspirational motivation (Truong et al. 2010). Therefore, it is very realistic to believe that, if customers like how celebrities and influencers look and even think about them as a business when it comes to marketing themselves in order to promote their products. But other researchers also believe aspirational perceptions are misleading and that for them, with an influencer's lifestyle aspirational view of a person (Audrezet et al., 2020) may cause them to view them as not realistic. Social media users like celebrities or influencers but they are worried about their authenticity with high-end aesthetic standards. The aspirational picture of skin bleaching products leads people to think of them as their beauty and their appearance as what they want and more social status. Because of that, when these influencers are recommending those kinds of products, a good response will probably be obtained. Based on that my hypothesis is as follows,

H_3a: Aspirational social status positively influences perceptions of influencer authenticity.

2.4.8 Aspirational Social Status and TikTok Algorithmic Exposure

Our engagement with online content, both on social media and beyond, is steered by the types of motivations that directly relate to our engagement with that content—more specifically, aspirational, identity-based motivations. Users employ social networking services to connect with others whose lifestyle or social identity they would like to emulate; hence the algorithms learn from these engagement patterns to recommend content based on such patterns (Truong et al., 2010; De Vries et al., 2020). This means that people with aspirational motivations will be exposed to more beauty, fashion, and lifestyle content because the algorithm will keep serving them content that has a high

engagement rate on those topics. TikTok's algorithm will further the process by feeding users a lot of highly engaging aspirational beauty content by continuously showing them aspirational beauty related videos.

Research has shown that aspirational content forms an integral part of the process of forming digital engagement and consumer behaviors (Hajli, 2015). In most cases, beauty influencers showcase their daily routines and the products they use to attain socially desirable identities. Hence, viewers are inspired to engage with aspirational content that involves beauty makeovers or improvements resulting from skincare product applications. For skin bleaching products, aspirational images may focus on perceived benefits such as attractiveness, self-esteem, and social approval. Most consumers will be able to engage with this content more frequently, thus allowing algorithms to increase the frequency and amount of content featuring beautification processes that they may see through recommendations on TikTok. Therefore, aspirational social status may create an environment where consumers find and access beauty-related content digitally. This leads to the development of Hypothesis.

H_3b: Aspirational social status significantly influences TikTok algorithmic exposure to skin-bleaching content.

2.4.9 Aspirational Social Status and Attitudes Toward Colourism

Beauty values are generally tied to social identity and status, which can make people more enthusiastic about colourism if they are seeking higher levels of assigned social status. People may conform to beauty ideals that heighten their social recognition or perceived physical attractiveness (Eastman et al. 1999). Colourism is often associated with lighter skin tones, beauty, privilege and success (Hunter, 2007). Thus, aspirational social level people may be more likely to have favorable attitudes toward lighter skin epitomes. These values of lighter skin are also often reinforced by social media, where photographs or representations of models and celebrities with lighter skin tones are disseminated as the ideal of beauty and success. This form of portrayal can affect how people perceive beauty standards, or how they see themselves against a beauty standard.

Some scholars argue that examples of resistance to colour-based beauty hierarchies are growing. Charles (2018) has pointed out that the natural beauty movement, through cultural movements, have resulted in a challenge against the historical beliefs of linking light skin with a higher level of prestige . For example, in many debates of beauty, identity and cultural pride on social media, there are competing and contradictory narratives, such as users who are attracted to aspirational beauty ideals

linked with global media, and users who encourage self-acceptance and variety. These contradictory accounts capture the ambiguity of aspirational identity linkages with respect to views towards colourism. Basically, people can respect aspirational beauty ideals and dispute their cultural worth at the same time. The data of aspirational motives with skin bleaching products suggests that aspirational motivations could impact how consumers perceive the lighter skin ideals, positively or negatively. From this discussion, the following hypothesis is suggested.

H_{3c}: Aspirational social status significantly influences attitudes toward colourism.

2.4.10 Influencer Authenticity and Consumer Bleaching Engagement

Audrezet et al. (2020) states that influencer authenticity is one of the most important factors in overall engagement with content consumption for digital marketing. Consumers respond to content with a brand that is authentic and trustworthy if they are inclined to listen to the brand and follow the influencer's recommendations. Authentic influencers do have personal stories and provide honest recommendations, which is a way to build greater trust with the audience. Then that trust helps its followers to use likes, comments, and/or shares with the influencers' content. That trust will impact the exposure to a product by others on social media in terms of beauty marketing. These demonstrations will entice and engage those who are interested in related content to follow and find others in which these products are presented.

Influencer attention is directly linked to purchase habits, as indicated in other consumer studies (Ki and Kim, 2019). Their followers, who are very responsive to them, also develop a stronger emotional tie with them and the products they use; hence, their followers are very likely to care about the products they sell or want to purchase. (Adrezet al., 2020) On the other hand, when followers perceive that the influencer has too much endorsement or is an inauthentic actor or celebrity, they will be skeptical of the product in that forum. That, too, is true that authenticity is required for real engagement. The authenticity of the interactions is crucial over the long term. If they have seen such products from the particular individual, then when the influencer introduces it, the most likely motivator would be genuine interest in looking up skincare routines and product lines for themselves, and the information from how well the product will be sold (E. K. D'Angelo). Such engagements may involve conversations with friends or teammates, reading and/or watching social media content, or even searching to find all the next relevant information to feel better prepared for the decision-making process of buying. From all this, we can posit the following research hypothesis;

H_4: Influencer authenticity positively influences consumer bleaching engagement.

2.4.11 TikTok Algorithmic Exposure and Consumer Bleaching Engagement

Algorithms play an important role in user engagement with digital media on TikTok because they analyse how users interact with the app and offer suggestions based upon their behaviour, which allows them to recommend videos (De Vries et al., 2020) For instance, if a user sees beauty related videos frequently enough, they become more interested in those products. By observing those products over time through repeated exposure, the user will also be more familiar with the skincare routine used or the cosmetic brands promoted in those videos. By being familiar with those products, the user will be encouraged to engage with the content by liking, commenting, and sharing. Engagement behaviour is important for TikTok because engagement impacts how much exposure the content gets across the entire TikTok platform. If a video receives high engagement, it will often be recommended to a broader audience.

Research conducted on email advertising using algorithmic exposure reveals a significant impact on consumer engagement and information seeking behavior (Hajli, 2015). Research has demonstrated that if consumers repeatedly encounter similar products through their own algorithmic exposure, they may view those products as being popular or socially endorsed; therefore, they may be more inclined to interact with that type of content. Algorithmic exposure in relation to skin bleaching products may stimulate consumers' curiosity about their skin care rituals and transformation from cosmetics, thus leading them to interact with beauty content and discuss the effectiveness of beauty products amongst themselves for longer. Therefore, such interactions could increase consumer engagement with skin-bleaching products. Thus, the following hypothesis is derived.

H_5: TikTok algorithmic exposure positively influences consumer bleaching engagement.

2.4.12 Attitudes Toward Colourism and Consumer Bleaching Engagement

The way that someone views colourism can impact on how they interact with content related to beauty, such as cosmetic products available on social media. For example, a person who thinks a person with lighter skin has an advantage may have more intentionality behind seeking out products that will change their skin tone (Hunter, 2007). This is true as those who believe in colourism will also look for content that shows them how to create a flawless skincare routine or have transformative beauty experiences by means of social media. Social media also provides multiple opportunities for consumers to say, "wow I would like to do the same," when they see before-and-after pictures of a person who has received a treatment. These pictures create curiosity, which may cause people to want to look for additional content related to the same type of beauty treatment. Consumers may engage

with this content through comments regarding the product's performance, or by sharing video links with friends or family. Another possibility is that consumers who do not believe in colourism will use social media in a different way than those who do believe in it. For instance, some individuals may post messages on social media that criticise beauty standards that favour lighter skin tones (Charles, 2018). Social media is often a platform where users discuss colourism and cultural identity. This promotes a variety of opinions that consumers have about their beauty practices. The relationship between engagement and support/criticism toward skin-bleaching products can vary greatly depending upon a person's perception of colourism. As a result, colourist attitudes might provide another means by which consumers evaluate beauty advertisements. This leads us to the next hypothesis.

H_6: Attitudes toward colourism significantly influence consumer bleaching engagement.

2.4.13 Consumer Bleaching Engagement and Purchase Intention

When it comes to buying things online, the engagement that consumers have with digital content frequently occurs prior to going through with a purchase. By liking, commenting on, and sharing digital content, consumers are declaring to have actively engaged with the information related to products (Hollebeek et al., 2019). This type of interaction can create more familiarity and develop more positive attitudes toward a product. Additionally, consumers can find out what other people, or their peers, think of a product through social media engagement, and those social media connections can help reduce the uncertainty consumers feel regarding how well a product will work or how good the quality of the product will be. In terms of beauty product marketing, consumers' engagement with skincare related content on social media may encourage them to see and use demonstration videos and to read testimonials from other consumers who use the product.

The research shows that there is a positive correlation between high levels of consumer engagement and intention to purchase (Liang, H., Liang, X., Sun, Y., Lin, D. and Huang, L. (2024). The more the consumer interacts with content related to a product, it can be assumed that he or she will show an increased interest in trying the product themselves. When developing an understanding of social validation through their interactions with others who are positively endorsing or giving feedback on the product, the consumer can feel a sense of validation through the engagement process. However, engagement is not necessarily a guarantee that a consumer will make a purchase; instead, they may engage with content for entertainment or informational purposes, as stated by some authors (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Even with this limitation, engagement in such instances is still considered a

major predictor of intent to purchase in a digital marketing environment. For example, consumers that are heavily engaged with beauty content may display a greater likelihood of purchasing skin lightening products that are being promoted as a result of the high levels of engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented.

H_7: Consumer bleaching engagement positively influences purchase intention of skin bleaching products.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The model below shows how cultural, social and technological factors influence consumer responsiveness to skin lightening products in the Zimbabwe's Tiktok environment. Religiosity, Ubuntu values, and the aspirational status are identified as the independent variables, these variables are expected to shape the three mediating variables namely; influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes toward colourism and the mediating variables will in turn influence the consumer bleaching engagement which then ultimately affects purchase intention

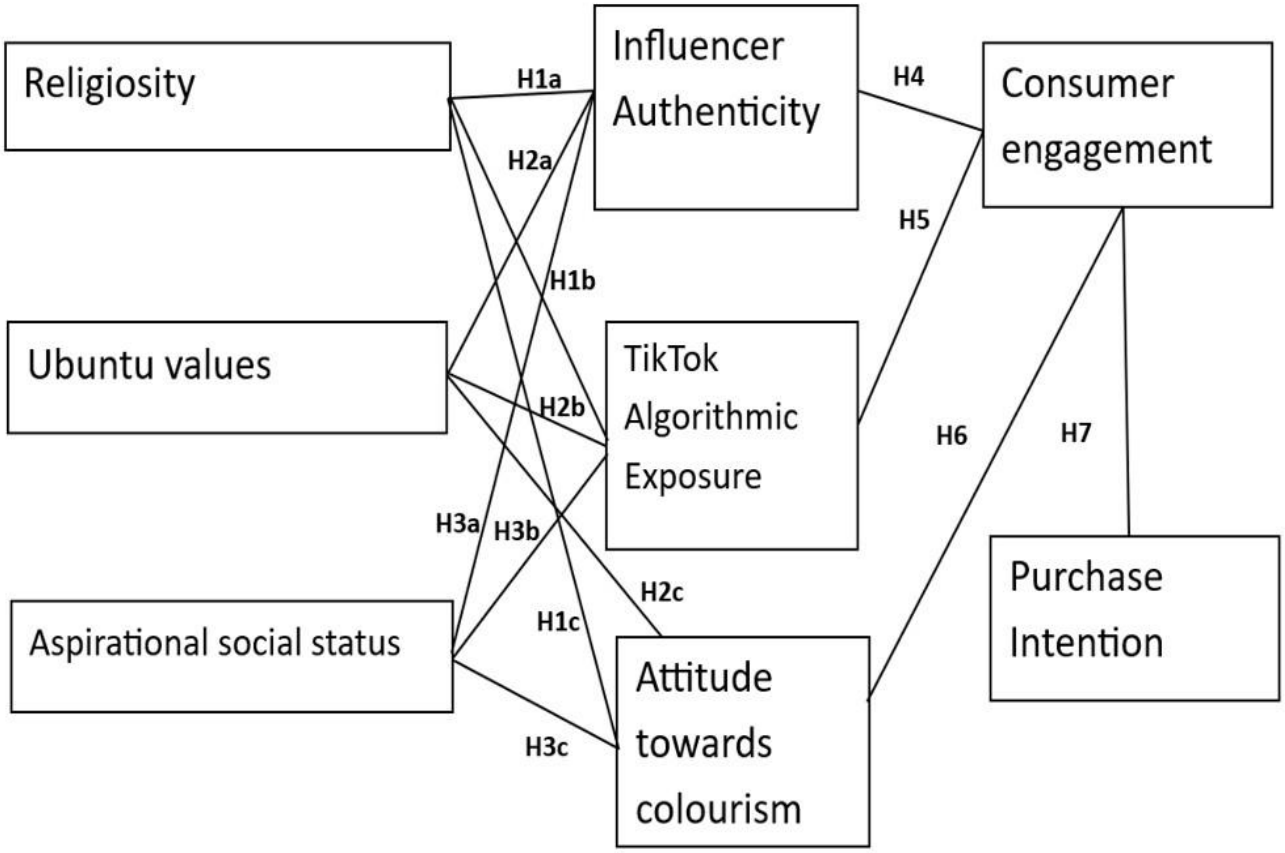


Figure 1:Conceptual Framework

2.6 Summary

This chapter critically reviewed the theoretical and empirical literature underpinning the study, with a focus on the key constructs of religiosity, Ubuntu values, aspirational social status, influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, attitudes toward colourism, consumer engagement, and purchase intention. The review aimed to establish a rigorous foundation for understanding consumer behaviour toward skin-bleaching products within Zimbabwe's digital environment.

The chapter laid the groundwork based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Together, the theories show how behaviour gets conditioned by attitudes, social structures, perceptions of control, and technology consumption. But they also showed that traditional behaviour models would only work well in a context that can contain culturally embedded and digitally mediated consumption patterns. In fact, the empirical research revealed that cultural beliefs such as religiosity and Ubuntu values, especially religiosity, are at the core of consumer perception and behaviour. Religiosity also served as a moral and interpretive basis in which consumer minds are influenced by beauty. As a contrast, Ubuntu views emphasise self-sacrifice and community identity while individualism and globalisation are driving consumer habits. This suggests that consumer consumption in Zimbabwe is still in tension with traditional values and digital technology and not just in the way they are today but also, that as consumers themselves perceive as they are interacting and consuming on the digital world, they have their lifestyle oriented towards aspiration. Literature has also noted that aspirational motivations can lead to engagement and interaction, but also, they can help perpetuate unrealistic expectations and socially constructed beauty hierarchies. On top of that, one lesson from this chapter was the role of digital influence and TikTok algorithmic exposure in building engagement or behaviour. Digital content authenticity is built on trust and credibility, yet its value, when commercialised, is compromised. Algorithmic exposure also adds visibility and relevance as it encourages more and more social interaction with content, but it might also continue to reproduce a biased beauty world of colourism. Colourism has longstanding and evolving perceptions of beauty and people and society. A contrast to the present age of inclusivity and pride might emerge, which is a recognition we need to have around this trend. For digital areas, beauty standards are far from settled. In contrast, consumer engagement was perceived as a mediating mechanism through which we turn consumer attention in the world into behaviour in order to bridge the gap between awareness and purchase intention. Purchase intention is perceived as the end game as cultural values, society, digital access and engagement processes all emerge. In essence, the chapter made clear that people's behaviour

towards skin-bleaching products is inter-related and multifactorial and affected by an interplay of cultural and social, psychological and technological aspects and is as detailed as possible. The review was valuable in demonstrating knowledge gaps in Africa in terms of theoretical and empirical basis and the gap between African cultural constructs and their role in digital consumer behaviour research.

These identified gaps provide a clear justification for the present study and serve as a foundation for the methodological approach adopted in the next chapter. Accordingly, Chapter Three outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed to empirically test the proposed conceptual model and hypotheses

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section describes the research design, target population, sampling framework, methodologies used in this research study; research tools, measurement scales, and methods for gathering data. Furthermore, this chapter addresses issues regarding the validity and reliability of data collected, along with ethical concerns as well as a discussion of the method implemented to analyse the data collected by the researcher. Finally, the research design has been established in such a manner that will allow for a logical, systematic, and thorough response to the objectives and hypotheses of the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2019).

3.1 Research Design

The causal research design chosen for the study was effective in establishing the relationship between the independent variables of religiosity, Ubuntu and social status aspirations and the mediators of influencer authenticity, the TikTok algorithmic impact and the attitude towards colourism or skin bleaching findings to provide insight into the dependent variables of consumer engagement in bleaching and the purchase intent. A quantitative methodology was used to attain data through the use of structured questionnaires. The researcher utilised the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and AMOS software for analysis purposes, but the analysis was not limited to these two analytical tools. The analysis of data in the study included descriptive statistical techniques such as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures to evaluate individual sampling adequacies and Bartlett's Test of Sphericities, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were performed. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha while validity, credibility, and relationships between constructs was accomplished via Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Target Population

The focus of this study was TikTok users in Zimbabwe who engaged with beauty and skincare videos, particularly those exposed to skin bleaching trends and influencer content on the platform. The target population was treated as large or undefined and a sample size of 375 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. This section of users was selected because TikTok has rapidly become one of the most influential social media platforms for beauty standards, self-perception, and consumer behaviours among emerging adults, primarily as a result of its algorithm driven content combined with the influencer/follower interaction (Mikalef,

Krogstie, Pappas and Pavlou, 2020). In addition, the emphasis of this research was on users who frequently engage with beauty videos, who view, like, comment, or share specifically for beauty and skincare videos, cosmetic procedures, and skin whitening trends. The researcher gathered data by providing printed questionnaires to individuals directly at beauty salons in both Harare and Bulawayo CBD. In Bulawayo, surveys were given out during the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) and also in the Mabvuku and Tafara suburbs; therefore, the researcher was able to easily access this population. Prior to letting people participate, screening questions were used to confirm that participants were real and active TikTok users who had seen beauty and skin bleaching content, instead of only having a nominal or superficial presence on TikTok.

3.3 Sampling frame

In Harare and Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), the study gathered information on TikTok users who were 18 years of age or older. The age was considered because people of legal age can make decisions on whether or not to buy and are generally much more active in discussing beauty and skincare issues on social media compared to younger users (Bryman, 2016). The Researcher established connections with the beauty salon clientele in salons located in Harare and Bulawayo CBD as well as the Mabvuku – Tafara high density suburbs with lots of young adults discussing beauty products, skin care routines and shopping online. Some participants were engaged using printed questionnaires during the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in Bulawayo where customers could easily fill out surveys participating directly in the research project.

3.4 Sample Size

A sample size of 375 respondents was targeted by the study, and it was considered sufficient as a base for adequate statistical power and reliability to extend the findings confidently to the entire community of TikTok users in Zimbabwe. The number of 375 was not chosen randomly; it was based on the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table (1970).

3.5 Sampling Procedure

A systematic random sampling method was utilised to interview participants for the study. Respondents were recruited from a physical presence at beauty salons, high density residential areas, and public places to identify individuals engaged or interested in beauty related and skincare related TikTok content. Every nth eligible respondent was recruited as they were found until the required sample was reached. The process of using systematic random sampling provided the respondents with an equal opportunity and structure to be selected; thus, the selection process reduced the potential for

selection bias and improved the generalisability of the findings for the population from which the sample was drawn (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016).

3.6 Research Instruments

Data collection was based on a structured instrument with 2 clearly organised sections, featuring a logical and practical flow. Section A requested respondent demographic information; such as their gender. age range, level of education, employment status, average daily time spent on TikTok and their prior purchase behaviour regarding beauty and skincare related products. The demographic data from Section A creates the demographic characterisation of the sample participating in this research; by identifying the research participants. Section B measured the main research variables being studied; listed below are the research variables with the various survey indicators measuring those variables; religiosity; Ubuntu values; aspirations of social status; authentic influencers; algorithmic exposure to TikTok; attitudes toward colourism; engagement in buyer bleaching; buyer intent. The majority of the survey indicators were adapted from previously established or validated measures found in past research literature to help maintain instrument reliability and validity. A structured questionnaire was an appropriate data collection instrument allowing the researcher to collect consistent quantitative data across a defined sample that could be statistically analysed through the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) Measure of Sampling Adequacy, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis), CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis), reliability testing, and SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Creswell and Creswell, 2018**).**

3.6.1 Measurement Scales

Table 1: Measurement Scales

Construct	Name of the scale	Author of the scale	No. of items in the scale
Religiosity	Religiosity scale	(Minton and Cabano, 2024)	6
Ubuntu values	Ubuntu Value Scale	(Mutsonziwa, 2020)	6
Aspirational social status	Status Consumption Scale	(Eastman et al., 1999)	6
Influencer authenticity	Influencer authenticity scale	(Audrezet et al., 2020)	6
TikTok algorithmic exposure	Algorithmic exposure scale	(De Vries et al., 2020)	6
Attitudes toward colourism	Attitudes toward colourism scale	(Craddock, 2022)	6
Consumer bleaching engagement	Consumer engagement scale	(Liang et al., 2024)	6
Purchase intention	Purchase intention scale	(Ajzen, 1991; Dodds et al., 1991)	6

In order to ensure the findings were consistent, reliable and trustworthy, the measurement items are from validated scales. The measurement of religiosity was based on items from Minton and Cabano (2024), Ubuntu values were assessed from the Ubuntu Value Scale as developed by Mutsonziwa (2020) and aspirational social status was measured from Eastman et al. (1999). In addition, influencer authenticity was measured based on the constructs from Audrezet et al. (2020); TikTok algorithmic exposure was based on prior research of previous studies of social media algorithms and digital interaction; colourism was using from Craddock (2022); consumer engagement in bleaching was measured using Liang et al. (2024) and purchase intention was from Ajzen (1991) and Dodds et al. (1991). Each construct had 6 items from the original authors. In all, there were 48 questions/indicators in the 8 constructs. The survey instrument was divided into two parts: demographics and main constructs of study. Each of the 48 items was scored using a 7-point Likert scale; where 1 = Strongly Disagree, and 7 = Strongly Agree. Because the Likert scale allows participants to express the degree

of agreement/disagreement with statements, and because it generates numerical data that can be statistically analyzed (using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), reliability analysis, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), it is appropriate to use this tool in this study.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected using questionnaires that had been printed out, and these were given to people in person at salons, busy suburbs, and at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF). Consent forms were given to all participants beforehand, explaining what the research was about, that their answers would be kept confidential or anonymous, and that they were free to choose if they wanted to participate. Each participant was informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time without any negative effect. The researcher who collected the data also distributed the questionnaires and monitored them to ensure that only eligible participants filled them out and that the response rate was kept high. In addition, follow-up and face-to-face interactions took place during the data collection process to encourage participants to fill out the questionnaires accurately and to reduce missing data. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), in most cases, providing the questionnaires to the respondents directly, instead of mailing or distributing the questionnaires by some other means, can result in higher response rates and more accurate and complete data collection in quantitative research environments.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity of the measurements was mostly assured by adapting items of earlier validated research measurements from previous studies. The researcher used the following tests to examine the suitability of the use of Factor Analysis to analyse the data; (1) Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (2) Bartlett's test of sphericity. Once the data were confirmed to be appropriate for Factor Analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were carried out, which represents the acceptable standard for showing construct validity. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the constructs and their reliability. Hair et al.,2019) stated that Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is acceptable.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted under ethical standards throughout the research process such as informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation. The participants were provided with details regarding the purpose of the study, that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence and that their responses were confidential. No personal identifying information was

collected and any information gathered was for academic or other purposes only. Prior to the collection of data, the researcher received ethical clearance and approval to conduct the study from the Bindura University of Science Education (Resnik, 2018).

3.10 Limitations of the study

Several limitations may have impacted on the results of this research. The majority of data gathering was conducted using self reporting of answers to survey questionnaires; these methods can introduce bias in the responses given by the subjects taking part in the study, including a tendency to provide socially acceptable responses rather than to be completely honest. The survey sample consisted primarily of TikTok users from three localised geographic locations, urban neighbourhoods, hair salons and densely populated suburbs - which indicates that these findings may not be capable of generalisation to the wider population. Cultural diversity in Zimbabwe from within and outside of the area of research may also influence individuals' views and interpretations of beauty standards and skin bleaching. Because the research was conducted cross-sectionally, it did not allow for tracking of behaviours over an extended period of time; thus, it cannot provide reliable evidence of longitudinal trends, since TikTok influencers and the algorithms by which people interact with TikTok's platform are subject to continuous change, as are trends in skin bleaching and colourism which are both sensitive topics for many individuals (Marshall and Crossman, 2016).

3.11 Data Analysis

The data analyses performed in this study employed both SPSS and AMOS software in order to support the exploratory and confirmatory phases of the study. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the characteristics of the sample population and to complete the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for the purpose of determining the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were completed to evaluate construct validity; the relationships between the constructs were assessed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to evaluate the proposed relationships and mediating effects of variables using Kline's (2015) model of the SEM process.

3.12 Summary

The chapter provided an overview of the methodology used in the research study. It outlined the method of causal research that was chosen and how a sample of 375 TikTok users were gathered from Systematic random sampling. It also explained how data was collected using a structured questionnaire that had already been through valid measurement scales; then analysed with SPSS and AMOS after assessing the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, test for sphericity (Bartlett's test), both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), as well as structural

equation modelling (SEM). The ethical considerations associated with the study have been pointed out with the intent of promoting integrity and credibility throughout the entire research process (Saunders et al., 2019).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical results of the study examining the effects of religiosity, Ubuntu values, aspirational social status mediated by the influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithm exposure, and attitudes towards bleaching/colourism on consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention. The structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed using AMOS to test the measurement and structural models. The analysis follows a systematic approach including reliability, validity, model fit, and hypothesis testing.

4.1 Response Rate

Three hundred and seventy-five respondents were given questionnaires, nevertheless two hundred and seventy-three questionnaires were completed. Consequently, the response rate was 72.8%. The response rate is enough as it is above the minimum threshold of 60% for social science studies, this therefore warrants the Researcher to conduct statistical analyses such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis, reliability testing, and Structural Equation Modelling.

4.2 Demographic Profiles

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	104	38.1	38.1	38.1
	Female	169	61.9	61.9	100.0
	Total	**273**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Age group	18	7	2.6	2.6	2.6
	19 - 24	96	35.2	35.2	37.7
	25 - 34	86	31.5	31.5	69.2
	35 - 44	47	17.2	17.2	86.4
	45 - 54	24	8.8	8.8	95.2
	55+	13	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	**273**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Education level	Primary	38	13.9	13.9	13.9
	O Level	33	12.1	12.1	26.0

	A Level	55	20.1	20.1	46.2
	Diploma	32	11.7	11.7	57.9
	Bachelors	36	13.2	13.2	71.1
	Masters	50	18.3	18.3	89.4
	Others	29	10.6	10.6	100.0
	Total	**273**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Employment status	Employed	67	24.5	24.5	24.5
	Self Employed	84	30.8	30.8	55.3
	Student	58	21.2	21.2	76.6
	Unemployed	64	23.4	23.4	100.0
	Total	**273**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Time spent on TikTok	Less than 30 Minutes	45	16.5	16.5	16.5
	30 - 60 Minutes	68	24.9	24.9	41.4
	1 - 2 Hours	81	29.7	29.7	71.1
	2 - 4 Hours	49	17.9	17.9	89.0
	More than 4 Hours	30	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	**273**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Following beauty and skincare influencers on TikTok	Yes	252	92.3	92.3	92.3
	No	21	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	273	100.0	100.0	
Purchase of beauty products after exposure on TikTok	Yes	199	72.9	72.9	72.9
	No	74	27.1	27.1	100.0
	Total	**273**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

The survey attracted 273 responses, 169 being female and 144 being male. Female responses made up 61.9% of the responses, while male was made up of 38.1%**.** The table above shows that all age groups were adequately represented, the age group 19 to 24 years had the highest responses with over 37.7%. The age group with the highest frequencies were 19 to 44 years with a combined total of 83.9%. These age groups consist of males and females exposed to the skin bleaching content and are likely to buy the skin bleaching or colourism products. Pertaining to the study on the level of education, respondents with the highest responses were those with A Levels with 20.1%. The table above shows that unemployed respondents constituted 23.4% of the respondents and students were the least with 21.2% of the respondents. Those employed and self employed had a combined total of 55.3% of the respondents. The results from respondents showed that most respondents spend an average of one to two hours on TikTok at any given time, with the highest total of 29.7% of respondents, while the least was for More than 4 Hours with a total 11.0% of respondents. The table above shows that a total of 252 respondents (92.3%) indicated that they follow beauty/skincare influencers on TikTok, while the remaining 7.7% indicated that they do not follow influencers on TikTok. With regards to buying beauty product after seeing, it on TikTok, 199 respondents said yes while 74respondents said no

4.3 The Uni-dimensionality Tests

Unidimensionality test refers to the situation in which observed variables tap only one and not several unobservable constructs. The unidimensional within research, especially when using Structural Equation Modeling, confirming the unidimensionality of items is considered a key step in validating the measurement properties of a construct. Each variable within the system is guaranteed to be perceived or reflected as one core scale element, with no overlap between this scale and others. This research examined unidimensionality through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) performed using SPSS AMOS. A factor loading of about 0.50 or more is a good indication and if it is higher than 0.70, it means a very strong correlation. When loadings are below these values or tend towards zero which is common in medicine, it often means that the item or behaviour may not be effective in showing the desired trait. It may therefore be necessary to remove such items during the process of refining or adjusting measurement models. The analysis was focused on three specific areas, the reliability of factors, how well the model fitted the data and the reliability of individual items. In theory, a variable is classified as a single factor if all its strong indicators load heavily on one factor and have minimal cross loadings. In this case, factor loadings were estimated to be above 0.70 and critical ratios (C. R. > 1.96) were equal to or above this number to ensure significance level.

Table 3: Reliability summary for study constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Reliability Interpretation
Religiosity	0.918	6	Excellent reliability
Ubuntu values	0.907	6	Excellent reliability
Aspirational Social Status	0.918	6	Excellent reliability
Influencer Authenticity	0.918	6	Excellent reliability
TikTok Algorithmic Exposure	0.905	6	Excellent reliability
Attitudes Toward Colourism	0.915	6	Excellent reliability
Consumer Engagement	0.913	6	Excellent reliability
Purchase Intention	0.913	6	Excellent reliability

The table above shows summarised results of reliability for the constructs under study, results for eight using Cronbach's Alpha. All constructs recorded alpha values above 0.90, ranging from 0.905 to 0.918, indicating excellent internal consistency across the measurement items. Each construct consists of six items. Religiosity, Aspirational social status and Influencer authenticity recorded the highest reliability scores at 0.918, while TikTok algorithmic exposure had the lowest score at 0.905, though it still falls within the excellent reliability range. In summary the results show that all constructs are highly reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Table 4 Consolidated KMO and Bartlett's test results for all variables

Variable/construct	KMO measure of sampling adequacy	Bartlett's approx. chi-square	df	Sig.
Religiosity	0.922	1050.708	15	.000
Ubuntu values	0.916	942.630	15	.000
Aspirational social status	0.923	1039.995	15	.000
Influencer authenticity	0.911	994.323	15	.000
TikTok algorithmic exposure	0.915	917.997	15	.000

Attitudes toward colourism	0.921	1006.119	15	.000
Consumer engagement	0.921	988.509	15	.000
Purchase intention	0.912	1002.711	15	.000

The table above shows that all constructs demonstrated strong suitability for factor analysis, as shown by KMO values ranging from 0.911 to 0.923, all of which are well above the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50. This confirms that the sample was adequate across all variables, including religiosity, Ubuntu values, aspirational social status, influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, attitudes toward colourism, consumer engagement, and purchase intention. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also statistically significant for every construct, with all significance values reported as .000, indicating that the variables were sufficiently correlated and appropriate for factor analysis. In summary, the consolidated results confirm that the measurement items for all constructs were statistically suitable for further analysis. The high KMO values and significant Bartlett's test results provide strong evidence that the data structure was valid for exploratory factor analysis and subsequent reliability, validity, and structural modelling procedures.

4.3.1 Religiosity

The construct of religiosity consisted of six (6) items RELI 1 to RELI 6 which are used to ascertain the fitness of the data for Factor Analysis and adequacy of the indicator variables to represent the construct. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) indicates the KMO value of 0.891 which is above the minimum of 0.50 and confirms that the sample would be an appropriate sample for factor analysis. The approximate Chi-Square value for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is 841.809 ($p < .000$) which suggests that the variables are sufficiently correlated or adequate to perform a Factor Analysis.

Following this, SPSS Amos was used to conduct Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the unidimensional structure, reliability, validity, and the general fit of the model. The standardised factor loadings were between 0.773and 0.836, and each one was significant at $p < 0.000$, so item reliability seemed good. The reliability measure, Composite Reliability (CR), was 0.9186, which is higher than the threshold of 0.70. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was 0.6533, exceeding the 0.50 cutoff, confirming the validity of the results.

Table 5: Factor Analysis results for religiosity

Item	**Loading (λ)**
My personal religious beliefs have a major impact on how I make decisions.	0.828
I regularly attend religious gatherings and go to the place of gathering as part of my routine.	0.836
My religion influences me to stick with traditional ways of purchasing and choosing products.	0.834
I am guided by my religious beliefs when it comes to judging others and the products they purchase.	0.782
As follows, my religious background decides too many of my everyday choices.	0.794
I rely on my belief system when I go for consumer products	0.773

Table 10 outlines the results relating to Construct Adequacy for religiosity. Hair et al. (2022) suggest that standardized factor loadings of 0.50 represent the minimum level of acceptability, and loadings of 0.70 or more provide evidence of strong indicator reliability. The factor loadings for all of the items relating to religiosity were between 0.773 to 0.836, demonstrating strong indicator reliability for all items. Additionally, Hair et al. (2022) state that Composite Reliability should exceed 0.70 to demonstrate Internal Consistency Reliability, and therefore the Composite Reliability value of 0.9186 indicates that the religiosity scale has demonstrated very high reliability. With respect to Convergent Validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.50, and thus the AVE value of 0.6533 indicates a large proportion of variance in the construct is explained by the indicators. Kline (2016) also provided details on how parameter estimates are considered statistically significant based on the cutoff for the p value (less than .05) and critical ratio (greater than 1.96 or less than -1.96). All of the factor loading values from this study were statistically significant at $p<0.001$; therefore, the religiosity items are statistically valid measures of the religiosity construct. As such, the overall conclusion is that the religiosity scale meets the accepted thresholds for reliability and convergent validity, and thus the scale is appropriate for use in subsequent analyses using structural models.

4.3.2 Ubuntu Values

The second construct: Ubuntu Values with six items identified as UBUN1, UBUN2, UBUN3, UBUN4, UBUN5, and UBUN6 was examined using SPSS Statistics with Exploratory Factor

Analysis (EFA). The purpose was to determine the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis, whether the observed variables actually represented the construct and to consider it. The value of Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of 0.916 was calculated and was found to be adequate as it was higher than 0.5. The sample was thus deemed suitable for factor analysis. The statistics produced the value of a chi-square of 942.630. The chi-square was significant at $p < 0.000$. The values produced were within the thresholds indicating sufficient correlation between the variables and as such were deemed suitable for the factor analysis.

After that, SPSS Amos was applied to run a Confirmatory Factor Analysis, to check whether the model was unidimensional, and also to look at reliability, validity and overall model fit. The standardised factor loadings landed between 0.738 and 0.849, and each of them came out significant at $p < 0.000$, so the item reliability looked very good. For reliability, the Composite Reliability (CR) value was 0.9074, it is above the 0.70 threshold. Also, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was 0.6209, which is over the 0.50 cutoff, and this supports the validity of the findings.

Table 6: Factor Analysis results for Ubuntu Philosophy

Item	**Loading (λ)**
My point is all humans together we are human and that is humanity and we are all connected to one another	0.849
People should always consider the well-being of those whom one is about to interact with in decision making	0.808
I want to care towards others with compassion that way my heart goes out of my head to caring about it.	0.764
I feel a sense of shared identity with people in the community	0.788
I support others when helping them requires a personal sacrifice for me	0.775
I believe that community harmony is more important than individual benefits.	0.738

The Ubuntu results presented in the table above demonstrate satisfactory construct adequacy. Hair et al. (2022) state that standardised factor loadings of 0.50 represent the minimum acceptable threshold,

while loadings of 0.70 or above indicate strong indicator reliability. In this study, all Ubuntu items loaded between 0.738 and 0.849, confirming that each item is a reliable indicator of Ubuntu. Hair et al. (2022) further recommend that composite reliability should exceed 0.70 to establish internal consistency reliability; accordingly, the composite reliability value of 0.9074 demonstrates that the Ubuntu scale is highly reliable. For convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that the average variance taken should be greater than 0.50. The AVE for Ubuntu is 0.6209 so Ubuntu accounts for a large proportion of the variance in the indicators of Ubuntu. Besides Kline (2016) parameter estimates are statistically relevant when the p-value is lower than 0.05 and critical ratio > 1.96. Since all factor loadings were significant when $p<0.001$ the Ubuntu items can be considered to be some interesting evidence of Ubuntu based on those two standards. In summary, this study indicates that the Ubuntu scale exhibits the standards of reliability and convergent validity and is thus suited to do more analysis.

4.3.3 Aspirational Social Status

Aspirational social status as shown in factor analysis table is satisfactory in construction of components. Hair et al. (2022) indicate that standardised factor loadings of 0.50 are at the borderline of acceptable values, with loadings of ≥ 0.70 indicating very reliable indicators. Based on the table of results, all Aspirational Social Status items exceeded the recommended threshold, confirming that each item is a reliable indicator of Aspirational Social Status. Hair et al. (2022) further recommend that composite reliability should exceed 0.70 to establish internal consistency reliability; accordingly, the reported composite reliability value confirms that the Aspirational Social Status scale is highly reliable. In relation to convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that the average variance extracted should be greater than 0.50. The reported AVE value therefore confirms that Aspirational Social Status explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators. Moreover, Kline (2016) explains that parameter estimates are statistically significant when the p-value is below 0.05 and the critical ratio exceeds 1.96. Since the factor loadings reported in the table are statistically significant, the items can be regarded as meaningful indicators of Aspirational Social Status. Overall, these findings confirm that the Aspirational Social Status scale satisfies accepted standards of reliability and convergent validity and is therefore suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

The third construct was Aspirational Social Status with six variables namely ASP1, ASP2, ASP3, ASP4, ASP5, and ASP6 were examined using SPSS Statistics with Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The aim was to see how appropriate the data were for factor analysis whether the observed variables truly mapped onto the construct and to consider it. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure of

sampling adequacy (KMO) showed a value of 0.923 and this was treated as adequate, since it was above 0.5. Because of that, the sample was deemed fit for factor analysis. The analysis generated a chi-square value of 1039.995, the result was significant at $p < 0.000$. Overall, the produced statistics were within the required confines, indicating a sufficient interrelationship among the variables, so they were considered suitable for the factor analysis.

After that, the Researcher conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis with the help of SPSS Amos to examine whether the model was unidimensional and to assess reliability, validity and overall model fit. The standardised factor loadings ranged between 0.761 and 0.84, and all of them were found to be highly significant at p less than 0.000. Thus, the item was deemed reliable. The Composite Reliability (CR) was also good, standing at 0.9179, considerably larger than the 0.70 threshold. Likewise, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) at 0.6509, is larger than 0.50 and supports validity.

Table 7: Factor Analysis Results for Aspirational Social Status

Item	**Loading (λ)**
I buy things to demonstrate my status in society.	0.84
I prefer products that appear stylish and polished.	0.806
I cannot modify my core behaviour of constantly helping others and approaching every scenario with a caring and gentle attitude.	0.834
It's difficult for me not to buy things that are of a more elevated status.	0.802
I aim to choose items that will be viewed with admiration and respect by others.	0.795
I tend to dismiss the fear of utilising luxury goods as a way to showcase social prestige.	0.761

The results of the factor analysis table reveal a satisfactory construct adequacy for aspirational social status. The minimum acceptable threshold for standardised factor loadings, according to Hair et al. (2022), is 0.50. Where loadings are 0.70 or more, these correspond to very strong indicator reliabilities. According to the results in this table, therefore, all items representing aspirational social status exceed the recommended threshold and can be considered to be reliable indicators of aspirational social status. The composite reliability must also exceed 0.70 in order to confirm internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2022); thus, the composite reliability value for aspirational social status is very high. Finally, for Fornell and Larcker (1981), the value for the average variance

extracted should be greater than 0.50. Indeed, the average variance extracted value reported for aspirational social status confirms that it explains a significant portion of the variance in the indicators. Kline (2016) indicates that a parameter estimate is statistically significant if the associated p-value is less than .05 and the critical ratio is greater than 1.96. The Factor Loadings provided in the table are statistically significant, therefore we can conclude that the factors are true representations of the construct known as Aspirational Social Status. Overall, these data support the claim that the Aspirational Social Status scale meets widely accepted criteria for reliability and convergent validity and therefore is appropriate for subsequent analysis of the structural model.

4.3.4 Influencer authenticity

The next construct was influencer authenticity with the following variables, INFA1, INFA2, INFA3, INFA4, INFA5, and INFA6. Data was analysed using SPSS Statistics by means of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The procedure was intended to assess the conformity of the data to factor analysis and find out if the variables being studied actually measure the construct under consideration. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was 0.911 which is more than the acceptable limit for validity of 0.50, it implies the sample is okay. After calculating Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, it was found that the Approximate Chi-Square was computed to be 994.323 which indicates a significant level of statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) the results show that variables are intercorrelated enough to warrant factor analysis

Table 8: Factor Analysis Results for Influencer Authenticity

Item	**Loading (λ)**
I think the influencers I follow are sincere and truthful.	0.876
The people I follow who promote products seem genuine in their endorsements.	0.797
I think influencers are truthful when sharing their opinions on products.	0.799
The influencers I follow genuinely engage with their followers and are sincere in their interactions.	0.784
I find the information shared by influencers to be credible and trustworthy.	0.774
I am more likely to act on influencer endorsements if I believe they are sincere and genuine.	0.733

The factor analysis table indicating the results for influencer authenticity indicates that the overall construct is, in general, quite adequate based upon established standards of measurement science.

Hair et al (2022) indicates that a minimum standard for standardised factor loadings would be 0.50, while loadings of 0.70 or more indicate good indicator reliability. The measurements shown in this table demonstrate that each of the items of the Influencer Authenticity scale have measurements which exceeded the minimum acceptable standard of reliability and therefore, can be approximated to be valid measures of the construct of Influencer Authenticity. According to Hair et al (2022), a measure of composite reliability should be greater than 0.70 for internal consistency reliability to be established; therefore the indicated value of the composite reliability reports that the Influencer Authenticity scale has high levels of reliability. Fornel and Larcker (1981) state that the average variance extracted (AVE) from the scale be at least 0.50 for evidence of convergent validity to exist; therefore, the AVE value from this analysis indicates that Influencer Authenticity accounts for substantial variance in its indicators. In addition, Kline (2016) describes the factor loading parameters as statistically significant when the associated P-value is less than 0.05, and the critical ratio is greater than 1.96. Given that all the factor loading values listed in the table were statistically significant; thus, the factors mentioned above should be viewed as valid indicators of Influencer Authenticity. Overall, these results substantiate that the Influencer's Authenticity Scales meet professional standards for both reliability and convergent validity, making them appropriate for additional structural model analysis.

4.3.5 TikTok algorithmic exposure

The fifth construct was TikTok Algorithmic Exposure with the following variables, TIKAE1, TIKAE2, TIKAE3, TIKAE4, TIKAE5, and TIKAE6. Data was analysed using SPSS Statistics through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The goal was to check if the data is appropriate for factor analysis and to ensure that the variables studied truly reflect the construct being analysed. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was equal to 0.915. Such a value suggests the sample is certainly large enough for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded significant results ($\chi^2 = 917.997$, $df = 15$, $p < 0.001$), which suggests that there are sufficiently high correlations between variables. Based on the compelling evidence, the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix would be discarded because of the small p-value. Hence, the EFA procedure was the preferable analytical technique in this study.

Table 9: Factor Analysis Results for TikTok Algorithmic Exposure

Item	**Loading (λ)**
I often see TikTok recommending content about products used for skin lightening.	0.811
Many times, I come across new products thanks to TikTok's recommendations.	0.776
The videos I watch on TikTok shape my fascination with certain products.	0.775
TikTok's algorithm seems to tailor my product-related videos quite effectively, in my opinion.	0.832
Being exposed to TikTok increases the chances that I will interact with product content.	0.745
The recommendations on TikTok introduced me to brands and products I wouldn't have known about otherwise.	0.76

The TikTok Algorithmic Exposure results presented in the factor analysis table demonstrate satisfactory construct adequacy. Hair et al. (2022) state that standardised factor loadings of 0.50 represent the minimum acceptable threshold, while loadings of 0.70 or above indicate strong indicator reliability. Based on the table results, all TikTok Algorithmic Exposure items exceeded the recommended threshold, confirming that each item is a reliable indicator of TikTok Algorithmic Exposure. Hair et al. (2022) further recommend that composite reliability should exceed 0.70 to establish internal consistency reliability; accordingly, the reported composite reliability value confirms that the TikTok Algorithmic Exposure scale is highly reliable. In relation to convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that the average variance extracted should be greater than 0.50. The reported AVE value therefore confirms that TikTok Algorithmic Exposure explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators. Moreover, Kline (2016) explains that parameter estimates are statistically significant when the p-value is below 0.05 and the critical ratio exceeds 1.96. Since the factor loadings reported in the table are statistically significant, the items can be regarded as meaningful indicators of TikTok Algorithmic Exposure. Overall, these findings confirm that the TikTok Algorithmic Exposure scale satisfies accepted standards of reliability and convergent validity and is therefore suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

4.3.6 Attitudes Toward Colourism

Attitude towards colourism was the next construct with the following variables, ATTIC1, ATTIC2, ATTIC3, ATTIC4, ATTIC5, and ATTIC6. Data was analysed using SPSS Statistics through Exploratory Factor Analysis EFA. The objective was to assess whether the data could be used for factor analysis and to ensure that the variables studied accurately represented the underlying construct we aimed to analyse. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used and resulted in a value of 0.921, significantly exceeding the minimum acceptable cutoff of 0.50, suggesting the sample is appropriate for further procedures. Then Bartlett's Test of Sphericity gave an Approximate Chi-Square value of 1006.119, and it was statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. Generally, the variables are related enough, and Factor Analysis is justified

Table 10: Factor Analysis Results for Attitudes Toward Colourism

Item	**Loading (λ)**
I think that individuals with lighter skin tones tend to have advantages over others in society.	0.827
In my opinion, having fair skin is considered to be beautiful.	0.793
It seems that certain people view dark skin in a negative light.	0.812
A person's identity can be determined by the part or the colour of the body of the part they achieve	0.806
Barriers related to colour prevent attaining certain stages, with social class affecting how audiences perceive skin colour.	0.788
I feel that the colour of someone's skin plays a role in whether they are accepted by others in a group.	0.782

The Attitudes toward Colourism results presented in the factor analysis table demonstrate satisfactory construct adequacy. Hair et al. (2022) state that standardised factor loadings of 0.50 represent the minimum acceptable threshold, while loadings of 0.70 or above indicate strong indicator reliability. Based on the table results, all Attitudes toward Colourism items exceeded the recommended threshold, confirming that each item is a reliable indicator of Attitudes toward Colourism. Hair et al. (2022) further recommend that composite reliability should exceed 0.70 to establish internal consistency reliability; accordingly, the reported composite reliability value confirms that the Attitudes toward Colourism scale is highly reliable. In relation to convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that the average variance extracted should be greater than 0.50. The reported

AVE value therefore confirms that Attitudes toward Colourism explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators. Moreover, Kline (2016) explains that parameter estimates are statistically significant when the p-value is below 0.05 and the critical ratio exceeds 1.96. Since the factor loadings reported in the table are statistically significant, the items can be regarded as meaningful indicators of Attitudes toward Colourism. Overall, these findings confirm that the Attitudes toward Colourism scale satisfies accepted standards of reliability and convergent validity and is therefore suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

4.3.7 Consumer Engagement

Consumer Engagement was the seventh construct with the following variables, CENGA1, CENGA2, CENGA3, CENGA4, CENGA5, and CENGA6. Data was analysed using SPSS Statistics, through Exploratory Factor Analysis EFA. The goal was to check whether the data could actually be used for factor analysis, and also to confirm that the variables we looked at really mirrored the underlying construct we wanted to explore. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was applied and came out to 0.921, which is way above the minimum acceptable cutoff of 0.50, so it indicates that the sample should be fine for the next procedures. Subsequently, the Chi-Square value from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was approximately 988.509, and the result was statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. In general, the variables seem to be connected in a sensible manner, which supports the use of factor analysis without much concern.

Table 11: Factor Analysis results of Consumer Engagement

Item	**Loading (λ)**
I frequently engage with online content by liking, sharing, or commenting on it.	0.838
I reshare content that is applicable.	0.815
I often check out the pages of my favourite content creators.	0.809
I tend to concentrate on the content of the product and follow it carefully over a long time.	0.811
I share with others the contents I have seen.	0.756
Once I finish some posts, I seek out more related content.	0.752

The consumer engagement results are adequate in terms of construct validity according to the factor analysis table (Hair et al. ((2022) the minimum acceptable threshold is standardized factor loadings

of 0.50 and at least 0.70 loading is considered as strong indicator reliability. The table results show that all consumer engagement items exceeded the recommended threshold confirming each item as a reliable indicator of consumer engagement. Hair et al. (2022) further suggest that composite reliability should be above 0.70 to establish internal consistency reliability; therefore, the reported composite reliability value confirms the consumer engagement scale is high reliable.

With respect to convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that the average variance extracted should be above 0.50. The reported AVE value, thus, confirms that consumer engagement explains a significant proportion of the variance in its indicators. Furthermore, Kline (2016) explains that the parameter estimates are statistically significant if the p-value is below 0.05 and the critical ratio is above 1.96. Since the factor loadings reported in the table are statistically significant, the items can be regarded as meaningful indicators of Consumer Engagement.

The findings confirm that the Consumer Engagement scale satisfies accepted standards of reliability and convergent validity and is therefore suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

4.3.8 Purchase Intention

The purchase intention construct consisted of six indicators, labeled PURI1 through PURI6, and data were examined with SPSS Statistics using Exploratory Factor Analysis to determine whether these measures truly reflected the intended underlying construct. The adequacy of the sample for Factor Analysis was confirmed by a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin's value of 0.912, far above the accepted threshold of 0.50, indicating the data were well-suited for extraction. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a Chi-Square of about 1002.711 with a statistically significant p-value ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that the correlations among the indicators were sufficiently strong to justify factor analysis. Overall, the observed relationships among PURI1 to PURI6 appeared coherent and aligned with the theoretical construct, providing solid justification for proceeding with the factor-analytic procedures.

Table 12: Factor Analysis results of Purchase Intention

Item	**Loading (λ)**
I intend to purchase various items that are listed online.	0.813
If an influencer recommended it to me, I would definitely consider buying it.	0.847
Whenever I consider a purchase, I tend to think of products I encounter on social media as possible options.	0.774
It is very probable that I will purchase the products listed above, to say the least.	0.799
I intend to make a purchase whenever I encounter a good presentation or talk.	0.740
Products that influencers have endorsed and emphasized as a main feature are my highest priority.	0.809

The Factor Analysis table results on Purchase Intention exhibit acceptable construct validity. The minimum acceptable standardised factor loading threshold is 0.50 per Hair et al. (2022). Factor loadings that are 0.70 represent high indicator reliability; the results indicate that all Purchase Intention items had standardized factor loadings that were at least equal to 0.70. Therefore, each item can be considered a reliable indicator of Purchase Intention. Also, Hair et al. (2022) state that for composite reliability to establish internal consistency reliability, the composite reliability must exceed 0.70. Thus, the reported composite reliability indicates that the Purchase Intention Scale has strong reliability. Finally, based on the convergent validity criteria established by Fornell and Larcker, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must be greater than 0.50. The reported AVE supports the fact that the Purchase Intention explains a large amount of variance in its indicators. In addition, Kline (2016) states that the estimates of parameters have a level of statistical significance when the value for p is less than or equal to 0.05, and the critical ratio > 1.96. The fact that there was statistical significance on all of the Factor Loadings listed in the table implies that the items are valid indicators of Purchase Intention. In conclusion, the results suggest that the Purchase Intention scale meets conventional standards for reliability and convergent validity. Given this conclusion, the Purchase Intention scale is appropriate for use in subsequent structural modelling analyses.

4.4 Measurement Model

The measurement model was analysed to assess its dependability and accuracy in measuring the constructs it was intended to represent. The evaluation of validity involved three main categories—content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity—each with its own specific function and significance. This study primarily examined construct validity by focusing on convergent and discriminant validity to determine how effectively the three constructs measured their respective theoretical concepts. Convergent validity was checked by considering factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) as the key indicators while discriminant validity was tested to ensure the constructs were not too similar or at least different from each other. The findings of the measurement model assessment are reported in the table below;

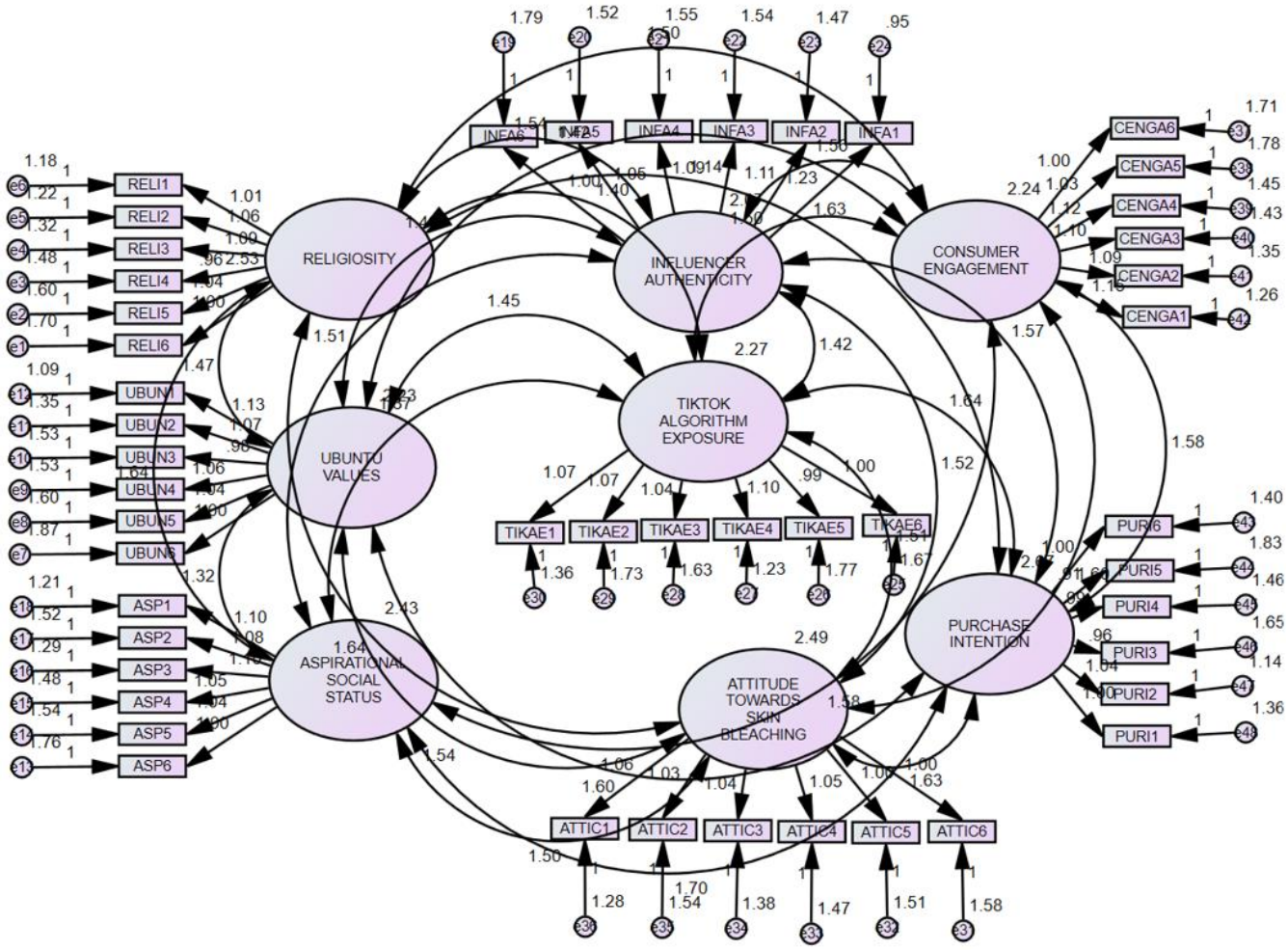


Figure 2:Measurement Model

It was observed that all constructs and their indicators loaded significantly onto their expected latent variables ($p < 0.001$), which verifies the reliability of the items and their unidimensional structure as shown below.

Table 13: Measurement Assessment Model

			Estimate
RELI6	<---	RELIGIOSITY	.773
RELI5	<---	RELIGIOSITY	.794
RELI4	<---	RELIGIOSITY	.782
RELI3	<---	RELIGIOSITY	.834
RELI2	<---	RELIGIOSITY	.836
RELI1	<---	RELIGIOSITY	.828
UBUN6	<---	UBUNTU_VALUES	.738
UBUN5	<---	UBUNTU_VALUES	.775
UBUN4	<---	UBUNTU_VALUES	.788
UBUN3	<---	UBUNTU_VALUES	.764
UBUN2	<---	UBUNTU_VALUES	.808
UBUN1	<---	UBUNTU_VALUES	.849
ASP6	<---	ASPIRATIONAL_SOCIAL_STATUS	.761
ASP5	<---	ASPIRATIONAL_SOCIAL_STATUS	.795
ASP4	<---	ASPIRATIONAL_SOCIAL_STATUS	.802
ASP3	<---	ASPIRATIONAL_SOCIAL_STATUS	.834
ASP2	<---	ASPIRATIONAL_SOCIAL_STATUS	.806
ASP1	<---	ASPIRATIONAL_SOCIAL_STATUS	.840
INFA6	<---	INFLUENCER_AUTHENTICITY	.733
INFA5	<---	INFLUENCER_AUTHENTICITY	.774
INFA4	<---	INFLUENCER_AUTHENTICITY	.784
INFA3	<---	INFLUENCER_AUTHENTICITY	.799
INFA2	<---	INFLUENCER_AUTHENTICITY	.797
INFA1	<---	INFLUENCER_AUTHENTICITY	.876

			Estimate
TIKAE6	<---	TIKTOK_ALGORITHM_EXPOSURE	.760
TIKAE5	<---	TIKTOK_ALGORITHM_EXPOSURE	.745
TIKAE4	<---	TIKTOK_ALGORITHM_EXPOSURE	.832
TIKAE3	<---	TIKTOK_ALGORITHM_EXPOSURE	.775
TIKAE2	<---	TIKTOK_ALGORITHM_EXPOSURE	.776
TIKAE1	<---	TIKTOK_ALGORITHM_EXPOSURE	.811
ATTIC6	<---	ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_SKIN_BLEACHING	.782
ATTIC5	<---	ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_SKIN_BLEACHING	.788
ATTIC4	<---	ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_SKIN_BLEACHING	.806
ATTIC3	<---	ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_SKIN_BLEACHING	.812
ATTIC2	<---	ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_SKIN_BLEACHING	.793
ATTIC1	<---	ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_SKIN_BLEACHING	.827
CENGA6	<---	CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	.752
CENGA5	<---	CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	.756
CENGA4	<---	CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	.811
CENGA3	<---	CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	.809
CENGA2	<---	CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	.815
CENGA1	<---	CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	.838
PURI6	<---	PURCHASE_INTENTION	.809
PURI5	<---	PURCHASE_INTENTION	.740
PURI4	<---	PURCHASE_INTENTION	.799
PURI3	<---	PURCHASE_INTENTION	.774
PURI2	<---	PURCHASE_INTENTION	.847
PURI1	<---	PURCHASE_INTENTION	.813

4.5 Construct Validity

In order to assess the construct validity, the convergent and discriminant validity were examined to confirm that the measurement items were properly representing the constructs they were intended to measure. Hair et al. Construct validity is defined as the extent to which a measuring scale measures the theoretical concept it is designed to measure and not other variables by (2006). Discriminant validity was verified by using cross-loadings, where each item loaded more strongly on the expected construct than on any other construct (Henseler et al., 2021). Then the convergent validity was tested by unidimensionality testing with the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in IBM SPSS Amos. The Composite Reliability (CR), the Standardised Regression Weights (SRW), the Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were tested according to Hair et al. (2022) and Kline (2023) guidelines. All standardised regression weights were greater than the conventional cut-off point of 0.50 and significant at $p < 0.001$ suggesting that the items are reliable and measure a single construct quite well**.** Furthermore, the Composite Reliability was greater than 0.70 and the AVE surpassed 0.50, demonstrating adequate convergent validity consistent with the standards set by Hair et al. (2022) and Henseler et al. (2021).

4.6 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is demonstrated when the observed indicators significantly and strongly load onto their respective latent constructs within the measurement model (Hair et al., 2022). In this research, I evaluated convergent validity by examining the standardised factor loadings. Using IBM SPSS Amos, we performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and the loadings were obtained through that process. Findings demonstrated that each observed indicator significantly contributed to its latent construct ($p < 0.001$), with all standardised factor loadings surpassing the threshold of 0.50. Hair et al. (2022) and Kline (2023) note that loadings greater than 0.50 suggest the indicators really, do represent their supposed constructs in a fair way. Overall, the results indicated that the measurement model showed acceptable levels of convergent validity for every construct involved, which was in line with expectations.

4.7 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was checked, so we could make sure the constructs really were different and not just overlapping in practice. Cross loadings plus construct correlations were reviewed too, mainly to see if the indicators were fitting better with their own construct, than with the other ones. This approach is also what Henseler et al. (2021) suggested. Overall, the results showed that the study constructs had satisfactory discriminant validity.

4.8 Reliability

Reliability was then evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, in order to look at internal consistency across the measurement items. As Hair et al. (2022) mention, a Cronbach's Alpha at 0.70 or higher is usually viewed as acceptable. In this case, every construct ended up above that benchmark, and the smallest value was 0.905 on TikTok algorithmic exposure. Religiosity and Aspirational social status were the highest with reliability coefficients of 0.918 each. Kline (2023) also notes that Cronbach's Alpha values that are nearer to 1.0 generally reflect stronger internal consistency. So basically, the instrument was not only dependable, but it also worked well as a good way to measure the constructs that were under investigation.

Table 14:Model Fit

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	124	1294.308	1052	.000	1.230
Saturated model	1176	.000	0		
Independence model	48	10528.625	1128	.000	9.334

Overall, the AMOS results presented in the table above imply that the measurement model has achieved a very good fit with the data collected. With a CMIN/DF of 1.230, the model demonstrates an excellent fit, as it is significantly lower than the common threshold of 3.0. The difference between observed and estimated covariance matrices appears to be rather small (less than 1). We derive from this that the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) is 0.029 which is still below the threshold of 0.08 which signifies that the measurement model is technically sound for this condition and that our measurement model is adequate which will lead to the next step which is to model the structural equation again and validate the hypotheses and theories for these issues from this point forward.

Table 15: Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.877	.868	.974	.972	.974
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Table 16: RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.029	.023	.034	1.000
Independence model	.175	.172	.178	.000

The results based on the Baseline Comparisons suggest that the proposed model matches the observed data generally at acceptable to excellent levels but not perfect on every index. The NFI (0.877) and the Relative Fit Index (RFI) (0.868) are somewhat below the conventional cut-off value of 0.900 indicating a somewhat marginal, but still acceptable fit. The Incremental Fit Index (IFI = 0.974), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.972) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.974) are all above the cut-off value of 0.90, with the values over 0.95 indicating an outstanding model fit. It is a perfect fit since it completely reproduces the covariance matrix and the fit values for the saturated model is exactly 1.000. The baseline comparison metrics showed a good level of overall incremental fit of the measurement model and a reasonable basis to proceed to the evaluation of the structural model and the testing of hypotheses.

4.9 Hypothesis Testing

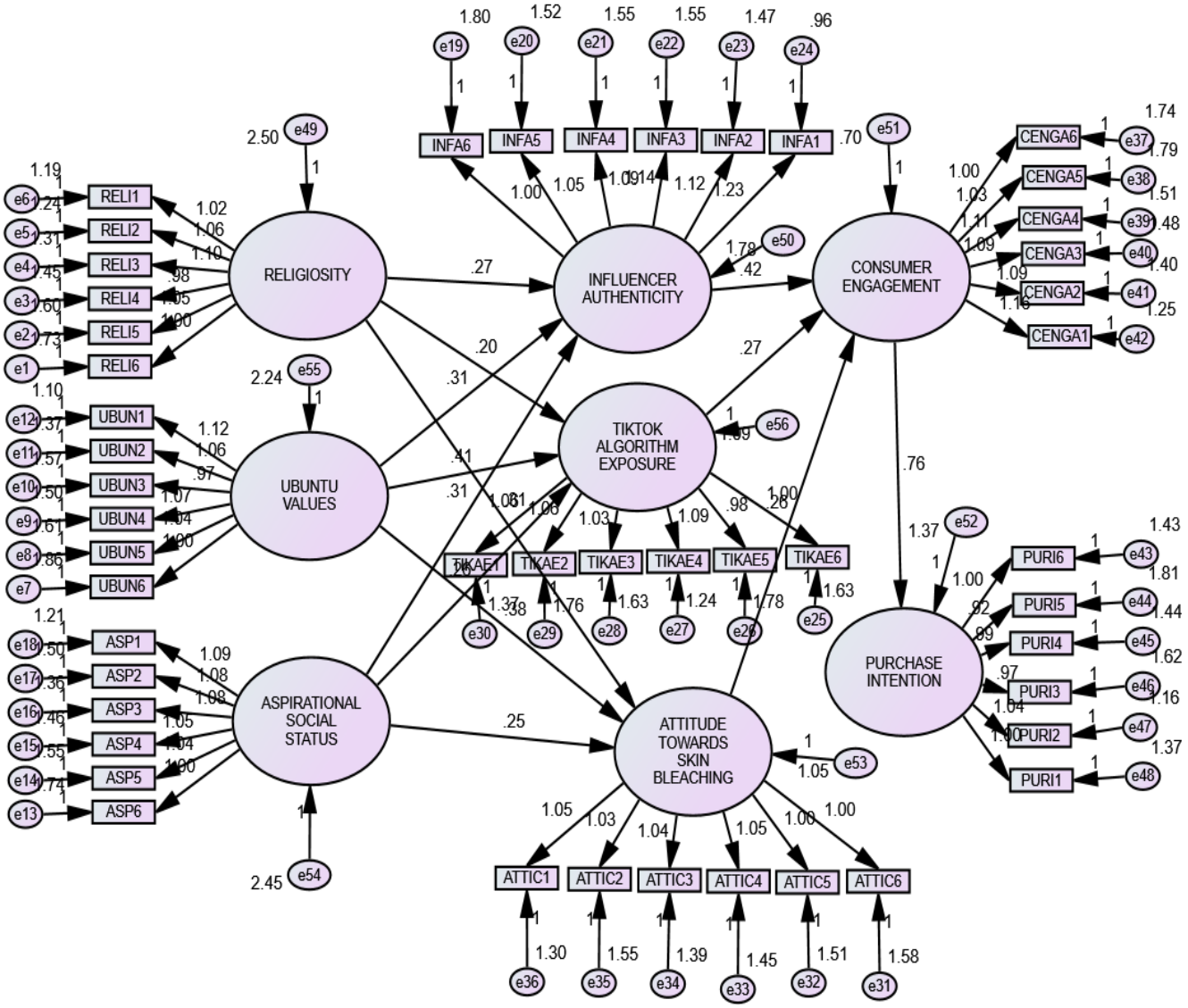


Figure 3:Structural Model

Table 17: Analysis of Hypothesis Testing

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Estimate
AUTHENTICITY	<--	RELIGIOSITY	0.267	0.046	5.77	***	Accepted	0.355
TIKTOK_ALGORITHM	<--	RELIGIOSITY	0.205	0.05	4.13	***	Accepted	0.246
ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_BLEACHING	<--	RELIGIOSITY	0.313	0.052	6.006	***	Accepted	0.371
INFLUENCER_AUTHENTICITY	<--	UBUNTU_VALUES	0.309	0.051	6.097	***	Accepted	0.390
TIKTOK_ALGORITHM	<--	UBUNTU_VALUES	0.405	0.06	6.796	***	Accepted	0.462
ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_BLEACHING	<--	UBUNTU_VALUES	0.377	0.058	6.554	***	Accepted	0.424
AUTHENTICITY	<--	ASPIRATIONAL_STATUS	0.315	0.049	6.446	***	Accepted	0.415
TIKTOK_ALGORITHM	<--	ASPIRATIONAL_STATUS	0.258	0.051	5.019	***	Accepted	0.308
ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_BLEACHING	<--	ASPIRATIONAL_STATUS	0.25	0.05	4.959	***	Accepted	0.295
CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	<--	AUTHENTICITY	0.419	0.075	5.618	***	Accepted	0.398
CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	<--	TIKTOK_ALGORITHM	0.267	0.06	4.42	***	Accepted	0.281
CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	<--	ATTITUDE_TOWARDS_BLEACHING	0.257	0.06	4.296	***	Accepted	0.274
PURCHASE_INTENTION	<--	CONSUMER_ENGAGEMENT	0.759	0.091	8.367	***	Accepted	0.630

H1a: Religiosity has a positive effect on the way people view influencer authenticity, in the promotion of skin bleaching products

The findings of the study revealed that religiosity philosophy has a statistically significant and positive influence on influencer authenticity. The structural equation modelling (SEM) results showed a standardised regression estimate of $\beta = 0.267$, a Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 5.77, and a probability value of $p < 0.001$. According to Hair et al. (2022), a path is considered statistically significant when the C.R. exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. The values obtained therefore confirm that the relationship between religiosity and influencer authenticity is highly significant. The results above confirm the previous research conducted by R Joanly et al (2022). The research noted

that there is a noteworthy positive relationship between influencers' trustworthiness and factors such as religiosity, social media participation, and the willingness to contribute donations. The greater the perceived credibility of a religious influencer among followers, the higher the followers' levels of religiosity tend to be. The results are also consistent with past studies by Luchsinger, (2020); McKeever, (2015), and Šisler (2017). Zhi Liu (2025) on the other hand, concluded that when youth encounter faith-based posts on social media, their attitudes begin to take shape, often growing more positive with content that feels relatable and meaningful.

The strength of the relationship suggests that religiosity is an important predictive factor of influencer authenticity. In behavioural and digital marketing research, positive and significant path coefficients imply that the independent construct contributes meaningfully toward influencing the dependent construct (Sarstedt et al., 2020). The strong Critical Ratio obtained in this study indicates that the relationship was not due to random sampling error but represented a genuine and reliable effect within the population under investigation. This therefore confirms the theoretical assumption that religiosity contributes significantly toward influencing authenticity and enhancing the effectiveness of the proposed conceptual framework.

Furthermore, the results are in line with the previous SEM literature, in that, positive structural coefficients indicate predictive relevance and theoretical validity in behavioural studies. Strong and significant path relationships enhance the explanatory power of structural models and contribute to theoretical robustness (Hair et al., 2022). Therefore, the empirical results of this study support hypothesis H1a – there is a significant positive relationship between religiosity and influencer authenticity.

H1b: Religiosity has a significant effect on TikTok algorithmic exposure on skin-bleaching products

We see a significant positive effect of religiosity on TikTok algorithmic exposure. The SEM results showed the regression estimate of $\beta = 0.205$, C.R. value of 4.13 and probability value of $p < 0.001$.. These findings indicate that the relationship between religiosity and TikTok algorithmic content is statistically significant since the obtained C.R. exceeded the recommended threshold of 1.96. The positive path coefficient demonstrates that improvements in religiosity positively enhance TikTok algorithmic content. The results therefore provide empirical support for the proposed relationship

between the two constructs. This research is supported by previous findings by Wang (2022) and Boeker and Urman (2022), who postulated that TikTok's algorithm relies on indicators such as watch duration, likes, comments, and shares to consistently promote users to content related to religion. Basically, it confirms existing beliefs and subtly guides spiritual views toward a specific perspective.

The findings imply that religiosity contributes substantially toward influencing TikTok algorithmic content and improving behavioural engagement purchase intentions of skin bleaching products. Contemporary SEM scholars such as Hair et al. (2022) and Alamer and Hair (2022) maintain that significant positive path coefficients indicate strong predictive relationships among latent variables. The significant relationship further demonstrates that the theoretical assumptions underpinning the study are supported by empirical evidence.

Additionally, the findings reinforce the notion that behavioural outcomes in digital environments are largely shaped by influential latent constructs. The statistical significance observed in this relationship confirms the stability and reliability of the model. The strong C.R. value further demonstrates that the relationship between religiosity and TikTok algorithmic content is robust and meaningful within the context of the study. Consequently, hypothesis H1b was accepted because there is a significant positive relationship between religiosity and TikTok algorithmic content.

H1c: Religiosity significantly influences attitudes toward colourism

The research results indicated that religiosity generally has a positive and statistically meaningful impact on people's attitudes toward colourism. The structural model produced a standardised regression estimate of $\beta = 0.313$ with a C. R. value of 6.006 and $p < 0.001$. These findings indicate that religiosity is a strong predictor of attitudes toward colourism, and the correlation is both meaningful and statistically significant.

According to the SEM guidance by Hair et al. (2022), the observed values of C.R. and probability validate the significance and reliability of the path coefficient. The positive coefficient indicates that the higher the level of religiosity, the higher the level of attitudes toward colourism. The results indicate that religiosity has a significant impact on the enhancement of behavioural intentions and, in turn, the overall effectiveness of the conceptual framework. A high Critical Ratio means the link is strong and has strong statistical evidence to back it up.

Finally, the results are in line with recent behavioural and marketing theories that suggest important underlying factors often have a positive impact on consumer perceptions and behaviour. It is quite obvious that strong positive path coefficients result in an increased predictive capacity as explained by researchers such as Sarstedt et al. (2020) and Hair et al. (2022).

The results support previous studies conducted in Africa. They suggested that religious beliefs and attitudes are very important in the formation of perceptions and engagement in practices of skin tone alteration and skin lightening. Research by Jablonski (2012), Noble (2018) and Campbell (2021) indicate that in many African societies, beauty standards are a blend of colonial heritage, cultural standards, religious values and media exposure. Many researchers have said that generally society has associated light skin with beauty, success, progress and high social status and this makes some people especially women resort to skin lightening methods.

This study basically indicates that religiosity has a considerable impact on perspectives about colourism, thereby validating hypothesis H1c.

H2a: Ubuntu values positively influence perceptions of influencer authenticity.

The study demonstrates that Ubuntu values play a crucial and statistically significant role in enhancing influencer authenticity. The SEM results revealed a standardised regression estimate of $\beta = 0.309$, a C. R. value of 6.097 and $p < 0.001$. This was also one of the strongest links in the structural model hence it suggests that the influence of Ubuntu principles on influencer authenticity is deep. The strength and the statistical reliability of the link is confirmed by the high Critical Ratio. The magnitude of the regression coefficient suggests that Ubuntu values are a strong predictor of influencer authenticity. As (Hair et al.2022), postulates, the higher the beta coefficients, the stronger the relationship of the latent construct, or the latent variables. The findings suggest that the adoption of Ubuntu leads to significant improvements in positive views and behavioural reactions to influencer authenticity. This link also points to the significance of Ubuntu values in accounting for some parts of the suggested theoretical framework. The outcomes of this study support previous studies that revealed that cultural values comparable to Ubuntu are important in influencing consumers' perception, trust and involvement with influencer marketing initiatives. This support is in line with the concepts of Mogobe Ramose and Mutsonziwa (2020) that in the African community, real

communication, communal trust, respect and moral accountability are crucial traits that impact not only the message but the perception of the message by others. The research suggests that viewers are more likely to trust influencers who are honest, humble, have a strong cultural identity, and are genuinely concerned for their communities. The findings also resemble studies in Asian contexts where collectivist cultural values are important in influencing views towards influencer marketing. Geert Hofstede's study from 2001 highlights that many Asian societies value collectivism, maintaini ng social harmony, showing respect, andfostering community-oriented relationships.

Therefore, hypothesis H2a was confirmed, demonstrating a meaningful positive correlation between Ubuntu values and influencer authenticity, which points to a relatively robust relationship.

H2b: Ubuntu values significantly influence TikTok algorithmic exposure to skin-bleaching content.

The findings of the study established that Ubuntu values have a statistically significant and positive influence on TikTok algorithmic exposure. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) results produced a standardised regression estimate of $\beta = 0.405$, a Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 6,796, and a probability value of $p < 0.001$. These results confirm that the relationship between Ubuntu values and TikTok algorithmic exposure is highly significant, as the C.R. value exceeded the recommended threshold of 1.96 while the probability value was below the acceptable significance level of 0.05. The positive beta coefficient further demonstrates that increases in Ubuntu values are associated with corresponding increases in TikTok algorithmic exposure. This indicates that Ubuntu values contribute meaningfully toward enhancing TikTok algorithmic exposure -related outcomes within the study framework.

This research study confirms studies by Adefemi (2025), Gondwe (2024), Boeker and Urman (2022), who examined the influence of TikTok algorithms on contemporary media, focusing on issues of authenticity, user behavior, emotional engagement, and community interaction, which are central to understanding digital media participation and the creation of personalised content. The time has passed when the audience should simply admire beautiful images and forget about what happens in life or in the world around them. Adefemi (2025) highlighted variations in audience acceptance levels within the same industry, mentioning that African viewers tend to engage more with and value influencers who share their racial background, such as Ugandan influencers.

Gondwe (2024) argued that instead of permitting digital algorithms to handle marketing and other functions in African communities without regard for the values they should promote, these algorithms should incorporate the Ubuntu principle, which emphasises interconnectedness, presence, and the well-being of the whole society.

Boeker and Urman (2022) also found that TikTok recommendations can alter user preferences to suit what TikTok wants, particularly if a user's preferences at the point of viewing are different from their previous likes and shares. The above results support the current study that TikTok influences influencer effectiveness, digital authenticity, and consumer purchase behavior. Thus, we accepted the hypothesis H2b, as we find in the survey that we do see a significant positive relationship between the values of Ubuntu and the algorithmic exposure on TikTok.

H2c: Ubuntu changes the way users think about colourism. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) data yielded a standardised regression estimate of $\beta = 0.377$ with a critical ratio (C.R.) of 6.554 and probability $p < 0.001$.

These findings confirm that the relationship between Ubuntu values and attitudes toward colourism is highly significant because the C.R. value exceeded the recommended threshold of 1.96, while the probability value was well below the acceptable significance level of 0.05. The positive beta coefficient further indicates that increases in Ubuntu values lead to corresponding increases in attitudes toward colourism. This demonstrates that Ubuntu values contribute positively toward influencing attitudes toward colourism related perceptions, engagement, and behavioural outcomes within the study context.

The results further suggest that Ubuntu values is a strong predictor of attitudes toward colourism and plays a critical role in strengthening the effectiveness of the structural model. The relatively high regression coefficient indicates that Ubuntu values exert substantial influence on attitudes toward colourism and significantly contributes toward explaining variations in the dependent construct. The strong Critical Ratio also confirms that the relationship is stable, reliable, and not due to random sampling variation. These findings support contemporary behavioural and digital marketing theories which argue that influential latent constructs significantly shape consumer attitudes, engagement, and behavioural intentions toward products and content.

Furthermore, the empirical evidence reinforces the theoretical validity of the study by confirming that Ubuntu philosophy is usually tied to a negative stance about changing one's skin colour, because it pushes people toward authenticity, self-acceptance, shared belonging, and a kind of pride in naturally African beauty. Ramose (1999) and Letseka (2012) argued that Ubuntu does not encourage things that feel like cultural estrangement, or a refusal of African identity.

In a similar way, Fayemi (2020) reported that skin bleaching clashes with African communitarian morals, since it can signal internalised colourism and a continuing unease with one's natural African identity. Gwaravanda (2011) also observed that many traditional African viewpoints connect attractiveness with ethical character and communal regard, not with a reshaped outside appearance.

However, recent studies show that social media and worldwide beauty norms are increasingly supporting positive attitudes toward skin brightening practices, by linking lighter skin with attractiveness, status, and success (The Guardian, 2025). Also, Lee and Jeon (2024) discovered that digital tools and AI systems often reinforce lighter-skin preferences through skewed visual portrayals.

Therefore, hypothesis H2c was accepted because the study confirmed that there is a significant positive relationship between Ubuntu values and attitudes toward colourism.

H3a: **Aspirational social status positively influences perceptions of influencer authenticity**

Findings indicate that aspirational social position is positively associated with influencer authenticity. The SEM standardised regression coefficient was $\beta=0.315$. A critical ratio (C. R.) of 6.446 was found. A probability value of $p < 0.001$. This connection is statistically significant, being much over the usual cut-off value of 1.96 and the P value is less than 0.05. Therefore, H3a, that Aspirational Social Status has a strong influence on perceived influencer authenticity is supported.

It further supports that it may be a predictive measure with confidence and underlines the impact of aspirational social status on the legitimacy of the model. Also the Critical Ratio shows that this connection is not shifting arbitrarily amongst the audience and indicates the robustness of this association. Prior research has shown that authenticity and trust of internet material influence the social standing of the audience.

This research supports the work of Abidin (2018), who found that influencer profiles attain high online status via a meaningful and convincing online presence – what she referred to as “calibrated amateurism”. In the other research, Haimson et al. (2021) demonstrated that open and truthful individuals readily rise in social status, receive more followers and establish trust on practically all social media platforms.

Liao et al. (2024) found that management of authenticity with clear shows of passion and transparent communication may significantly increase visibility by algorithms and audience involvement. Boeker and Urman (2022) had a similar result, arguing that social media algorithms favour emotionally related material, which increases the creator’s online visibility via higher exposure in terms of likes, comments, and shares.

Authenticity indeed has been a crucial part of influencer marketing that mirrors public trust and buying inclination and the perpetual digital effect of social media marketing. Additionally, the reputation is the foundation of the influencer platform which according to Duffek (2025) and trust was a basic element to implant in the public. Barari et al. (2018) pointed out that real influencers have greater engagement and buy intention than mainstream commercial commercials. So, if they are a credible source that can be trusted as reliable information on the internet, this will help you in social status, authority and influence in digital culture. It will provide credible information, and it is more important as it will create the quality and legitimacy of your content (Barari et al. 2018).

These findings line up with contemporary behavioural and digital marketing theories, which claim that influential latent constructs meaningfully shape consumer attitudes, interaction patterns, and behavioural intentions toward products, and also toward the content itself.

Additionally, the empirical outcomes seem to reinforce the theoretical basis of this research, because they show that Aspirational social status has a meaningful effect on influencer authenticity. In other words, the results suggest that if organisations strengthen Aspirational social status, then authenticity related outcomes can improve, and the effectiveness of the proposed behavioral framework may be heightened. This also matches what recent Structural Equation Modelling studies have been reporting, where higher positive path coefficients are treated as evidence of robust predictive power and explanation across the main constructs.

Thus, H3a got accepted since the study essentially established that Aspirational social status and influencer authenticity are significantly positively related.

H3b: Aspirational social status significantly influences TikTok algorithmic exposure to skin bleaching content.

The study findings showed that aspirational social status has statistically significant, and positive influence on TikTok algorithmic exposure. In the results of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the standardised regression estimate was $\beta = 0.258$, and the Critical Ratio (C. R.) was 5.019. The value of probability was $p < 0.001$. It may be stated that there is quite significant overall association between aspirational social status and TikTok algorithmic exposure. The C. R. was more than the suggested threshold of 1.96 and the p value kept on being less than 0.05. The beta coefficient being positive also shows that, with higher aspirational social standing, TikTok algorithmic exposure grows. This study unveils that aspirational social status is what drives TikTok's algorithmic exposure for favourable impressions, much engagement, and very particular behavioural reactions.

The findings also demonstrate that aspirational social status is a strong determinant of TikTok algorithmic exposure and it significantly increases the explanatory power of the structural model. In this way, the study contributes to the literature by showing how TikTok's algorithms create sharply contrasting ideas of social status, primarily through increasing visibility, evoking more interactions, making a person better known, and boosting influence online. TikTok's algorithms are argued to amplify content that is perceived as engaging, emotionally moving, and interesting, as first proposed by Boeker and Urman (2022) and later also by Vombatkere et al. (2024). This in turn relates to online fame, gaining followers, and changing perceptions of social status. That is why they are so popular. As Abidin (2018) has underlined, algorithmic boost and authenticity represent the primary aspects of digital celebrity and influencer status.

The study presents some evidence and indicates aspirational social status as having a robust effect in increasing visibility outcomes of the TikTok algorithm. In other words, the enhancement of aspirational social status may improve consumer engagement, overall perceptions, and behavioural intentions regarding algorithmic content on TikTok. The results are in line with current SEM studies: a strong positive coefficient means a strong predictive association and a well-defined explanatory

relationship between variables. Thus, Hypothesis H3b is supported. There was a strong positive relationship between aspirational social status and exposure to the TikTok algorithm.

H3c: Aspirational social status significantly influences attitudes toward colourism.

Attitudes toward colourism were evidently influenced by aspirational social status. The results from the analysis of SEM give us a standardised regression model, $\beta = 0.25$, from which we obtain a C.R. (critical ratio) of 4.959 and $p < 0.001$. It clearly made aspirational social status a strong determinant of colourism since the C.R. value was above the recommended value and a probability value below significance ($p < 0.05$). The positive beta coefficient also showed that attitudes toward colourism increased with higher levels of aspirational social status. The aspirational social status of their own community will thus positively influence their views on values, behaviour patterns, and acceptance among themselves regarding colourism. This study replicates the results of prior work that social status has a positive interaction with the attitude of moving to a lighter skin tone since, traditionally, light skin has been defined as beauty, attractiveness, modernity, and a higher social station for people to develop. Blay (2011) asserts that colourism and colonial beauty standards continue to influence perceptions of social status, beauty, and prestige; for those who do not fit these standards, it is easier to associate lighter skin with their ethnic or social identity than people with lighter skin are often perceived as being socially well versed. Hunter (2007) also found that other societies do see lighter skin tones as privileged, although they lack desirability or economic value. Inversely, individuals of lower social status see lighter skin as better than the light grey skin colour typical of whites.

Hunter (2007) replicates these results and adds that in other societies, light skin is privileged in ways that do not translate to desirability or economic value. This other study also found that in other societies, lighter skin is privileged in ways that don't translate to desirability or economic value. Lower-status individuals do view lighter skin as better, but in this case, it is better than the light grey skin colour typical of whites.

Skin tone concepts are subtly embedded in beauty filters, influencer images, and celebrity branding as well as recommendation algorithms and everyday Internet content and bring it closer to the accepted standard of beauty. AI systems were found to have a bias toward lighter skin, thus possibly supporting the perception that light skin is preferable. This may further entrench the general perception in society that lighter skin is more attractive and preferable. They also posit that online

lifestyles and cultures in a new generation would likely impact skin brightening practices, especially those of younger social media users.

The African Communitarian Theorists Fayemi (2020) would, however, argue that changing one's natural skin tone is to deny the values of Ubuntu in terms of authenticity, self-acceptance, and dignity among the community. Skin bleaching, according to Fayemi (2020), is often about issues of status and colourism related to class. All these studies show that the desire to raise oneself to higher social status may contribute to a favourable view of lighter skin tones, but Ubuntu does not encourage such beliefs by affirming African identity as the way in which it is so. Aspirational social status also turned out to be a significant causal indicator of attitudes toward colourism and a major factor in enhancing the predictive power of the structural model.

It supports current behavioural and digital marketing theories, where influential latent constructs shape significantly consumer attitudes, interaction, and engagement with content and products. Therefore, hypothesis H3c is supported because the research showed a notable positive correlation between Aspirational social status and attitudes toward colourism.

H4: Influencer authenticity positively influences consumer bleaching engagement.

To sum up, the research confirmed that influencer authenticity affects consumer bleaching engagement and the effect is positive and statistically significant. The regression estimate based on the SEM data was $\beta = 0.419$, C.R. = 5.618 and $p < 0.001$. We notice that the correlation is favourably significant even beyond our required C.R of 1.96 and below 0.05. The positive beta coefficient implies that actually the user interaction with bleaching is substantially greater to attain higher levels of influencer authenticity. This finding confirms the favourable effect of influencer authenticity on consumer engagement in the bleaching behaviour.

This study highlights influencer legitimacy as a significant determinant of consumer bleaching involvement. The amplitude of the association is modest, but it is statistically significant, theoretically relevant, and probably not due to random sample fluctuation. This outcome is compatible with behavioural and consumer engagement theories. Theories argue that behavioural intentions, audience involvement and customer responses to items and digital content are underpinned by substantial latent structures.

The research results under study are confirmation of previous studies which consistently show that content authenticity positively influences consumer engagement on social media platforms because consumers are more likely to trust, relate to, and interact with content perceived as genuine and emotionally realistic. Delphine et al. (2020) found that authentic influencer content strengthens emotional attachment, credibility, and consumer trust, thereby increasing audience interaction and participation. Similarly, Bishop (2021) established that audiences increasingly prefer relatable, transparent, and unfiltered content because it creates perceptions of honesty, intimacy, and social closeness between creators and followers.

Research by Barkhuus and Bødker (2023) further revealed that transparent communication and genuine self-expression significantly improve audience participation by increasing perceived authenticity and emotional connection. Likewise, Yang et al. (2024) found that authentic user-generated content positively influences engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, watch time, and follower retention because consumers perceive authentic creators as more trustworthy, socially relatable, and credible.

Authenticity is critical to digital influence and, ultimately, so is the realisation that consumers are at war with over-commercialised and over-regulated content in our increasingly algorithmic social media era, Hund (2023). Therefore, the findings that influencer authenticity effects customer behaviour and engagement support the theoretical position of this research. These findings are consistent with other previous research using structural equation modelling and suggest larger positive coefficients that may be used to predict and explain interactions between constructs.

Thus, H4 is validated as influencer authenticity is favourably and strongly associated to consumer engagement participation.

H5: TikTok algorithmic exposure positively influences consumer bleaching engagement

It was concluded that TikTok algorithmic exposure had a significant and positive effect on consumer bleaching engagement. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) data produced a standard regression value $\beta = 0.267$ and critical ratio C.R. was 4.42 with probability value $p < 0.001$. These results show that the effect of TikTok algorithmic exposure upon consumer bleaching engagement is huge owing

to the C.R. above the suggested value of 1.96 and value of probability 0.05. The positive beta coefficient further demonstrates that increases in TikTok algorithmic exposure led to corresponding increases in consumer bleaching engagement. This indicates that TikTok algorithmic exposure contributes positively toward shaping consumer bleaching engagement -related perceptions, engagement, and behavioural outcomes within the study framework.

The results are in close agreement with the previous study in that TikTok algorithms make users more emotional in introducing material online and amplifying its suggestions. Zeyi Liu et al (2023) proved that TikTok's recommendation system boosts engagement for consumers on the platform by offering personalised user-centric content, learned from users, their browsing history, and their behaviour on the platform — to the person being recommended and thus the interaction frequency. In 2024, Martini and Jorge demonstrated that the promotion of entertaining content on their algorithm has a positive impact on likes and comments from the audience and thus drives the participation rate to the platform at a young age specifically for digital consumers (Martini and Jorge, 2024).

This study can also further support Duffy (2022) in his argument that the algorithms of TikTok incentivise creators to consistently share innovative, culturally relevant, and trend-driven content that will hold the audience's attention. Bucher (2021) illustrated how algorithms are impacting user behaviours and user-generated material by encouraging people to pay attention to exposing their content, obtaining digital attention, and perceived significance on the internet.

Further, the results are also consistent with the Structural Equation Modeling literature that strongly advised us that a considerably positive coefficient would be adequate for strong predictive and explanatory associations with the constructs researched. Therefore, hypothesis H5 was accepted as it showed that there is a positive association between exposure to the TikTok algorithm and consumer bleaching involvement.

H6: Attitude towards colourism significantly influences consumer bleaching engagement.

The findings revealed that attitudes toward colourism have a positive and statistically significant influence on consumer bleaching engagement. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis produced a standardised regression estimate of $\beta = 0.257$, a Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 4.296, and a probability value of $p < 0.001$. These results confirm that the relationship is highly significant, as the C.R. exceeds the recommended threshold of 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. The positive beta

coefficient further indicates that higher levels of attitudes toward colourism are associated with higher levels of consumer bleaching engagement. This suggests that attitudes toward colourism contribute positively to consumer bleaching engagement and related behavioural outcomes within the study framework.

The results further suggest that Attitudes toward colourism is an important predictor of consumer bleaching engagement and significantly contributes toward strengthening the explanatory power of the structural model. The relatively strong regression coefficient indicates that Attitudes toward colourism exerts meaningful influence on consumer bleaching engagement and enhances behavioural engagement associated with the dependent construct. The high Critical Ratio also confirms that the relationship was stable, reliable, and not due to random sampling variation. These findings support contemporary behavioural and consumer engagement theories which argue that influential latent constructs significantly shape consumer attitudes, behavioural intentions, and interaction with products and digital content.

The findings of the current study are consistent with previous and current research which indicates that skin tone significantly influences consumer engagement through beauty perceptions, media visibility, and audience interaction. As noted by Hall (2018) and Rooks (2019), lighter skin tones are linked with beauty, sophistication, and social desirability, which may increase audience attention and engagement. For this reason, media is also known to show a lot of lighter-skinned persons and consumer behavior and interest in material that meets the popular beauty stereotype with most mainstream beauty standards.

The findings also support Sanders and Noble (2023) who posit that digital and algorithmic systems tend to amplify disparities of visibility based on socially endorsed criteria of beauty rooted in colour. In a similar vein, Sarah Banet-Weiser (2022) shown that physically appealing innovators embody socially validated beauty criteria (not all humans do).

In the same way, the present study revealed that skin tone positively influences consumer engagement because consumers tend to interact more with influencers and content creators perceived as visually attractive and socially desirable. However, the current findings also align with Agozino (2021), who argued that colourism and appearance-based preferences may conflict with African values of

authenticity, dignity, and natural identity. Collectively, these findings confirm that skin tone remains an important factor influencing consumer engagement, audience perception, and digital interaction within contemporary social media environments. Therefore, hypothesis H6 was accepted because the study confirmed that there is a significant positive relationship between Attitudes toward colourism and consumer bleaching engagement.

H7: Consumer bleaching engagement positively influences purchase intention of skin-bleaching products.

The findings of the study revealed that Consumer bleaching engagement has a statistically significant and positive influence on purchase intention of skin-bleaching products. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis produced a standardised regression estimate of $\beta = 0.759$, a Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 8.367, and a probability value of $p < 0.001$. These findings confirm that the relationship between Consumer bleaching engagement and purchase intention of skin-bleaching products is highly significant because the C.R. value substantially exceeded the recommended threshold of 1.96, while the probability value was far below the acceptable significance level of 0.05. The positive beta coefficient further demonstrates that increases in Consumer bleaching engagement led to corresponding increases in purchase intention of skin-bleaching products. This indicates that Consumer bleaching engagement contributes strongly toward shaping purchase intention of skin-bleaching products -related perceptions, engagement, and behavioural outcomes within the study framework.

The results further suggest that Consumer bleaching engagement is the strongest predictor of purchase intention of skin-bleaching products within the structural model. The exceptionally high regression coefficient indicates that Consumer bleaching engagement exerts substantial influence on purchase intention of skin-bleaching products and contributes significantly toward strengthening the explanatory power of the model. The high Critical Ratio also confirms that the relationship was stable, reliable, and not due to random sampling variation. The findings of the current study support existing literature which suggests that consumer engagement positively influences purchase intention within digital and social media environments. Previous studies by Vivek Kumar et al. (2012) established that engaged consumers develop stronger emotional attachment and participation with brands, leading to increased willingness to purchase products and services.

According to Linda Hollebeek (2014), the more consumers participate, the more trust, contentment and loyalty, all of which are positively associated to purchase intention. This research extends the previous work of Anjala Krishen et al. (2023) who discovered that digital material that was interactive and emotionally engaging was effective in increasing customer trust, product knowledge and purchase behaviour. “It also increases the buying desire of consumers on TikTok interaction, they said. Chen and Wang (2024) also affirm this. They also observed beneficial effects of emotional connection and engagement of customers via TikTok interaction on purchase intention.

Similarly, this research observed that increased customer interactions increase buy intention because it creates emotional connection, touch, trust and consumers’ interest with digital material. Thus, the findings of this study confirm past work and demonstrate that customer relationship remains relevant to consumer buy intention under the current social media marketing techniques.

The findings of the research have further empirically supported the hypothesis for such a study, and the results show that the customer engagement bleaching has a major influence on purchase intentions of skin bleaching products. More significantly, the results of this research show that generally customer interaction bleaching has a favourable impact on consumer impression, engagement, and behaviour to buy of the items they want. This conclusion is consistent with the existing Structural Equation Modelling literature, in that positive route coefficients suggest substantial predictive and explanatory linkages across domains. The extremely high value of beta shows that the relationship still persists. Thus, hypothesis H7 was accepted stating that consumer bleaching engagement is positively correlated with purchase intention of skin bleaching products and can therefore be considered as a valid mechanism to evaluate price point and other skin colour options.

4.10 Results and Discussion

The results of this chapter were supported empirically for the proposed model, and the core elements showed adequate validity, reliability and overall model fit. Influencer authenticity, exposure to TikTok algorithms and feelings about colourism were significantly affected by Religiosity, Ubuntu principles and aspirational social status. These results imply that inherent cultural, moral and social variables are more significant than internet exposure in understanding consumer behaviour in Zimbabwe about skin-bleaching products. The study revealed that influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure and perspectives towards colourism had a positive and significant effect on consumer engagement in bleaching. These characteristics were also substantially and favourably

affecting purchasing intention. This research shows that the exposure to platforms and values of the culture is transferred in the behaviour in the digital world. In conclusion, this research is the first, to the best of our knowledge, to empirically show the effects of cultural values, social goals, digital platform dynamics, and online activity engagement on consumers' purchase intentions.

4.11 Summary

The results show that the study achieved a strong response rate of 72.8%, with 273 usable questionnaires returned from the 375 distributed. The demographic results indicate that female respondents formed the majority, while the largest age groups were young adults between 19 and 34 years, showing that the sample was highly relevant to TikTok-based beauty and skincare consumption. Most respondents followed beauty and skincare influencers on TikTok, and a substantial proportion purchased beauty products after exposure on the platform, confirming that TikTok plays an important role in shaping beauty-related consumer behaviour. The reliability and validity tests confirmed that the constructs were statistically acceptable, while factor analysis supported the suitability of the measurement items. The structural model results revealed that religiosity, Ubuntu values and aspirational social status had positive and significant effects on influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure and attitudes toward colourism. In turn, influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure and attitudes toward colourism significantly influenced consumer bleaching engagement. Finally, consumer bleaching engagement had a strong positive effect on purchase intention, indicating that active interaction with bleaching-related content is a key pathway through which cultural values, social aspirations, influencer credibility and algorithm-driven exposure translate into the intention to purchase skin-bleaching products in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

Given the above findings, it is suggested that beauty related digital marketing should be conducted in a culturally sensitive and morally responsible way by marketers, regulators, consumer protection agencies and digital platform players. First, marketing practitioners need to be aware of the tremendous effect of religion and Ubuntu values on the way consumers perceive influencer messaging and beauty related material. Campaigns should be designed to promote dignity, shared values, authenticity and cultural identity and not perpetuate destructive or discriminatory beauty standards. Second, organisations that use influencer marketing should promote honest, trustworthy and socially responsible communicators since the authenticity of influencers was shown to significantly enhance consumer engagement with skin-bleaching products. Thirdly, there has to be more monitoring and ethical supervision of the algorithmically amplified skin-bleaching material on platforms such as TikTok, as repeated exposure may foster a sense of normality towards the damaging beauty standards and encourage engagement with such content. In this regard, the Zimbabwean government and consumer protection agencies should take a more stringent stance on digital skin-bleaching adverts, particularly if they are based on society anxieties or are perpetuating colourist ideologies. Fourth, public education and awareness programmes should be developed to break negative attitudes towards colourism and to promote self-acceptance, natural beauty and pride in African identity. Attitudes towards colourism are key to consumer engagement with bleaching and educational interventions may be useful for shifting attitudes and reducing sensitivity to colour based beauty standards. Finally, commercial and social communication methods should increase the visibility of the role of aspirational social status in beauty consumption. Marketing and advertising should be promoting more inclusive and strong ideals of beauty, success and self-esteem, instead of linking social mobility to a lighter complexion or a different face. These concepts will advance more responsible practices of digital marketing and a more culturally situated approach to the consumption of beauty in Zimbabwe.

5.1 Summary

The independent variables were religiosity, Ubuntu values, and aspirational social status. The mediators were influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and attitudes towards colourism. These factors were assumed to influence consumer bleaching engagement and purchase intention of skin bleaching products in Zimbabwe. The findings validated that religion has a statistically significant beneficial effect on influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure and attitudes on colourism. To put it simply, religious values and beliefs will affect consumers' view of an influencer's validity, engagement with algorithm recommended content, and attitudes toward skin tone and colour based beauty preferences. Ubuntu ideals were statistically significantly positively associated with influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure and opinions towards colourism.

The results show that community values, shared identity and collective cultural ideas are important to the beauty content and digital persuasion assessment process by consumers. Aspirational social standing positively and substantially affected influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure, and views toward colourism. This suggests that needs for recognition, status and social climbing could play a role in a more active engagement with beauty content and socially imposed beauty norms. Consumer bleaching engagement was also positively influenced by influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure and views on colourism. This implies that consumers are more engaged with skin bleaching material from influencers they see as real, they are repeatedly exposed to algorithmically advised beauty content and have more positive views regarding colourism. The research also proved that customer bleaching involvement has a very high positive impact on purchase intention of skin-bleaching products. This confirms the high possibility of the intention to acquire skin-bleaching products when customers are highly involved with the content of bleaching, goods, and internet chats. The research generally shows that consumer behaviour in this setting is influenced by the combination of cultural, social, technical and psychological elements in the Zimbabwean digital economy.

5.2 Conclusions

Religion, Ubuntu values and aspirational social standing have been proven to strongly influence consumers' response to algorithmically dispersed skin-bleaching materials on TikTok and influencer marketing. All the stated cultural and societal characteristics were positively connected with the influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithmic exposure and attitudes towards colourism. Such was the

case with a number of elements, digital exposure, personal beliefs, identity needs and societal aims, that were found to influence the consumer's relationship with the skin bleaching content on the platform. The findings also add that the legitimacy of influencers is an important factor in affecting customer engagement with sanitising on the platform, as it leads to a great degree of the audience's engagement with bleaching-related material due to the influencers' perceived credibility, reliability and authenticity. For instance, the algorithmic exposure on TikTok played an important role in increasing consumer engagement with skin bleaching content; hence, it can be argued that consumer engagement and behavioural responses are magnified by persistent and personalised exposure to beauty related content. There is a positive relationship between consumer decontamination activity and views on colourism, indicating that notions of attractiveness based on colour continue to influence digital consumer behaviour. The consumer's engagement with bleaching was the most significant predictor of purchase intention of skin bleaching products. It means that as the consumer becomes more actively engaged with information related to bleaching, their intention to purchase also increases. Findings indicate that, the purchase intention of skin bleaching products in Zimbabwe is driven by a combination of cultural idealism, aspirational motives, influencer persuasion, algorithmic visibility, and consumer engagement mechanisms within the digital spheres.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the above conclusions, it is recommended that marketing managers, policymakers, and digital platform stakeholders should approach beauty-related digital marketing with greater cultural and ethical sensitivity. The first point is for marketers to appreciate the fact that religiosity and Ubuntu values play a significant role in the interpretation of influencer messages and beauty-related content. Therefore, beauty campaigns should, therefore, be designed to respect communal values, dignity authenticity, and cultural identity, rather than perpetuating the negative and exclusionary beauty norms. The second point is for organisations involved in influencer marketing to use credible and authentic influencers who are transparent and responsible in communication because influencer authenticity was found to significantly increase consumer bleaching engagement. The third and final point is extremely relevant: We need to monitor and control the algorithmically amplified skin-bleaching content on TikTok on an ongoing basis and can lead to unhealthy beauty standards. Zimbabwe's political leaders and consumer protection agency need to take action on digital advertising of skin-bleaching products and whether these promotional messages attack social insecurities of people and promote colourism. We need to have public campaigns around public attitudes towards colourism and their effect on the positive self-acceptance and natural beauty

associated with a woman or a person belonging to Africa. And so, there have to be many ways to be educated to make this product look and act as a tool for consumers with this kind of mindset that might be based upon colour and make it less colour-driven. And there's the problem of how businesses and social campaigns shape consumer aesthetics like white skin products and colour is the end of that. Rather than linking social advancement to lighter skin or altered appearance, marketing and advocacy schemes should be about more inclusive and positive meanings of beauty and success. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders will be better able to respond to the cultural and technological factors influencing beauty consumption in Zimbabwe and lessen the negative effects of skin-bleaching habits.

REFERENCES

Abidin, C. (2018). Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online. Emerald Publishing.

Adefemi, K. O. (2025). Student influencer monetisation strategies and authenticity in African digital markets. Digital Marketing, 6(4), 181–196.

Agozino, B. (2021). Ubuntu and African identity in contemporary digital cultures. African Identities Journal.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179–211.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179–211.

Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Algharabat, R. (2017). Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature. *Telematics and Informatics, 34*(7), 1177–1190.

Alamer, A., & Hair, J. F. (2022). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in second language and education research: Guidelines using an applied example. Research Methods in Applied Linguistics, 1(3), 100027.

Alper, M., & Kuo, P. (2020). Influencer marketing in the digital age: A study of authenticity and engagement. Journal of Marketing Research, 57(3), 415–428.

Alper, M., & Kuo, R. (2020). Influencer transparency and consumer trust in digital advertising. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 20*(3), 220–235.

Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 48(1), 79–95.

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. (2020). Authenticity in influencer marketing. Journal of Business Research, 120, 317–329.

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research, 117*, 557–569.

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. Journal of Business Research, 117, 557–569.

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. Journal of Business Research, 117, 557–569.

Banet-Weiser, S. (2022). Authentic™: The politics of ambivalence in a brand culture. New York University Press.

Birhanu, Z., & Yimer, M. (2018). Skin bleaching and beauty ideals in African consumer culture. *African Journal of Consumer Studies, 12*(2), 45–58.

Blay, Y. (2011). Skin bleaching and global white supremacy: By way of introduction. The Journal of Pan African Studies, 4(4), 4–46.

Boeker, M., & Urman, A. (2022). An empirical investigation of personalization factors on TikTok. arXiv Preprint.

Breves, P. L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., & Kunze, A. (2020). The perceived fit between Instagram influencers and the endorsed brand: How influencer–brand fit affects source credibility and persuasive effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research, 60*(4), 440–454.

Breves, P., Mans, F., & S. M. (2020). The effects of social media influencers on consumer behaviour: A systematic review. Journal of Business Research, 118, 141–154.

Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research, 14*(3), 252–271.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Bucher, T. (2018). *If...then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press.

Chae, J. (2018). Explaining females' envy toward social media influencers. Media Psychology, 21(2), 246–262.

Charles, C. A. D. (2018). Skin bleaching and the prestige complexion of sexual attraction. *Sexuality & Culture, 22*, 335–346.

Chevalier, J. A., & Mayzlin, D. (2006). The effect of word of mouth on sales: Online book reviews. *Journal of Marketing Research, 43*(3), 345–354.

Chevalier, J. A., & Mayzlin, D. (2006). The effect of word of mouth on sales: Online book reviews. Journal of Marketing Research, 43(3), 345–354.

Chikafu, C., & Chinomona, R. (2022). Aspirational consumption and social media influence among African youth. *African Journal of Business and Economic Research, 17*(3), 99–118.

Chinomona, R. (2013). The influence of brand experience on brand satisfaction, trust and attachment in South Africa. *International Business & Economics Research Journal, 12*(10), 1303–1316.

Chinomona, R., & Maziriri, E. T. (2017). The influence of brand awareness, brand association and product quality on brand loyalty and repurchase intention. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research, 12*(1), 10–21.

Cialdini, R. B. (2019). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion* (Rev. ed.). Harper Business.

Cotter, K. (2019). Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate influence on Instagram. *New Media & Society, 21*(4), 895–913.

Craddock, E. (2022). Colourism and consumer behaviour. Journal of Cultural Studies, 14(2), 88–104.

Craddock, N. (2022). Colourism, beauty standards, and social identity in digital cultures. Journal of Consumer Culture, 22(4), 845–861.

Craddock, N. (2022). Colourism, body image, and appearance-based discrimination in contemporary society. *Body Image, 42*, 1–10.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly, 13*(3), 319–340.

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising, 36*(5), 798–828.

De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeflang, P. S. H. (2020). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: An investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 26*(2), 83–91.

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing purchase decisions. *Computers in Human Behavior, 68*, 1–7.

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Computers in Human Behavior, 68, 1–7.

Dodds, W. B., Monroe, K. B., & Grewal, D. (1991). Effects of price, brand, and store information on buyers' product evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research, 28*(3), 307–319.

Dodds, W. B., Monroe, K. B., & Grewal, D. (1991). Effects of price, brand, and store information on buyers' product evaluations. Journal of Marketing Research, 28(3), 307–319.

Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research. *International Journal of Information Management, 59*, 102168.

Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. International Journal of Information Management, 59, 102168.

Eastman, J. K., Goldsmith, R. E., & Flynn, L. R. (1999). Status consumption in consumer behavior: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 7*(3), 41–52.

Eastman, J. K., Goldsmith, R. E., & Flynn, L. R. (1999). Status consumption in consumer behavior: Scale development and validation. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 7(3), 41–52.

Eastman, J. K., Goldsmith, R. E., & Flynn, L. R. (1999). Status consumption in consumer behaviour. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 7(4), 41–52.

Efendy, M. (2026). Dataset Subjective Well Being. Mendeley Data. https://doi.org/10.17632/xcm4vg8yjf.1

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1–4.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5(1), 1–4.

Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing Instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioural intent. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 17*(2), 138–149.

Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing Instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioral intent. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 17(2), 138–149.

Fayemi, A. K. (2020). Is skin bleaching a moral wrong? An African bioethical perspective. Journal of Global Bioethics, 31(1), 1–10.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Addison-Wesley.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39–50.

Glenn, E. N. (2008). Yearning for lightness: Transnational circuits in the marketing and consumption of skin lighteners. *Gender & Society, 22*(3), 281–302.

Glenn, E. N. (2008). Yearning for lightness: Transnational circuits in the marketing and consumption of skin lighteners. Gender & Society, 22(3), 281–302.

Gondwe, G. (2024). Artificial intelligence, journalism and the Ubuntu robot in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards a normative framework. Journal of African Media Studies, 16(1), 45–62.

Gwaravanda, G. (2011). Shona proverbial implications on skin bleaching: Some philosophical reflections. Journal of Pan African Studies, 4(8), 244–255.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). Multivariate data analysis (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2022). A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., Danks, N. P., & Ray, S. (2022). *Partial least squares structural equation modeling using R: A workbook*. Springer.

Hajli, N. (2015). Social commerce constructs and consumer's intention to buy. *International Journal of Information Management, 35*(2), 183–191.

Hall, R. (2018). The bleaching syndrome: African Americans' response to cultural domination vis-à-vis skin color. Journal of Black Studies.

Hanzaee, K. H., & Zare, A. (2011). The effect of religion on consumer behaviour. *Journal of Islamic Marketing, 2*(3), 212–221.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2021). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modelling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 49*, 115–135.

Hollebeek, L. D., Srivastava, R. K., & Chen, T. (2019). Service engagement: Customer engagement and value co-creation. *Journal of Service Management, 30*(2), 1–20.

Hunter, M. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. Sociology Compass, 1(1), 237–254.

Hunter, M. (2011). Buying racial capital: Skin bleaching and cosmetic surgery in a globalised world. The Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 36(2), 281–306.

Hunter, M. L. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. *Sociology Compass, 1*(1), 237–254.

Hunter, M. L. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. Sociology Compass, 1(1), 237–254. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006.x

Iwu, C. G., & Eze, S. C. (2016). Ubuntu and African consumer behaviour: A cultural perspective. *African Journal of Business Management, 10*(14), 345–354.

Jamshidi, D., & Zarei, A. (2018). The role of religiosity in consumer decision-making. *Journal of Islamic Marketing, 9*(2), 341–358.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons, 53*(1), 59–68.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. Business Horizons, 53(1), 59–68.

Kaye, D. B. V., Chen, X., & Zeng, J. (2021). The co-evolution of two Chinese mobile short video apps: Parallel platformization of Douyin and TikTok. *Mobile Media & Communication, 9*(2), 229–253.

Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. Celebrity Studies, 8(2), 191–208.

Ki, C. W. C., & Kim, Y. K. (2019). The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic. Psychology & Marketing, 36(10), 905–922.

Ki, C.-W., & Kim, Y.-K. (2019). The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers. *Psychology & Marketing, 36*(10), 905–922.

Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

Kline, R. B. (2015). Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

Kline, R. B. (2023). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (5th ed.). Guilford Press.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30*(3), 607–610.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30(3), 607–610.

Lee, M. H. J., & Jeon, S. (2024). Vision-language models represent darker-skinned Black individuals as more homogeneous than lighter-skinned Black individuals. arXiv Preprint.

Letseka, M. (2012). In defence of Ubuntu. Studies in Philosophy and Education, 31(1), 47–60.

Liang, X., Chen, Y., & Zhang, L. (2024). Consumer engagement and cosmetic consumption behaviour in digital beauty communities. Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 23(1), 45–61.

Liang, X., Yang, J., & Chen, Y. (2024). Consumer engagement in social media marketing: Effects on purchase intention. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 65*, 45–62.

Liu, S., Li, Y., & Zhang, J. (2019). Influencer credibility and consumer engagement in online marketing. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 36*(6), 740–750.

Liu, X., Li, G., & Zhang, Y. (2019). The impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase intention: The mediating role of trust. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 48, 253–261.

Lou, C., & Kim, H. K. (2019). Fancying the new rich and famous? Explicating the roles of influencer content, credibility, and parental mediation in adolescents' parasocial relationship, materialism, and purchase intentions. Frontiers in Psychology, 10, 2567.

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19*(1), 58–73.

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19(1), 58–73.

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility influence consumer engagement. Journal of Advertising, 48(5), 1–14.

Marshall, C., & Crossman, A. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). Designing qualitative research (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. Heinemann.

Mikalef, P., Krogstie, J., Pappas, I. O., & Pavlou, P. (2020). Exploring the relationship between big data analytics capability and competitive performance. *Information & Management, 57*(2), 103169.

Mikalef, P., Pappas, I. O., & Giannakos, M. N. (2020). Big data and social media analytics in marketing research: A systematic review. Information Processing & Management, 57(2), 102–124.

Mikalef, P., Pappas, I. O., & Giannakos, M. N. (2020). The role of social media influencers in the consumer decision-making process. Journal of Business Research, 117, 337–347.

Minton, E. A., & Cabano, F. (2024). Religiosity and consumer behaviour: A global perspective. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 34(1), 45–62.

Minton, E. A., & Cabano, F. G. (2024). Religiosity and consumer behaviour: Moral values, identity and consumption. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 23*(1), 1–15.

Minton, E. A., & Cabano, F. G. (2024). Religiosity and consumer behaviour in contemporary digital environments. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 41(2), 210–225.

Mokoena, K. K. (2024). Ubuntu ethics and artificial intelligence in Africa: Human-centred perspectives on digital technologies. Verbum et Ecclesia, 45(1), 1–10.

Monk, E. P., Jr. (2021). The unceasing significance of colorism: Skin tone stratification in the United States. Daedalus, 150(2), 76–90. https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_01847

Moyo, B., & Adebayo, R. (2020). Natural beauty movements and resistance to colourism in African digital spaces. *African Journal of Communication, 12*(1), 55–72.

Munthali, G. N., & Mvula, P. M. (2019). Ubuntu and communal values in African consumption practices. *Journal of African Cultural Studies, 31*(3), 280–295.

Muposhi, A., & Dhurup, M. (2017). The influence of green product knowledge and subjective norms on consumer purchase intention. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 8*(3), 83–91.

Muposhi, A., & Dhurup, M. (2022). Social media influencer credibility and consumer purchase intentions in emerging African markets. African Journal of Business Management, 16(4), 95–107.

Mupunga, D., & Chuchu, T. (2021). Religious values and consumer behaviour in Zimbabwean markets. *Journal of African Business, 22*(4), 550–568.

Mutsonziwa, K. (2020). Ubuntu philosophy and African consumer identity in digital societies. African Journal of Business Ethics, 14(1), 33–47.

Mutsonziwa, K. (2020). Ubuntu values and consumer decision-making in African markets. *African Journal of Marketing Management, 12*(4), 65–78.

Mutsonziwa, T. (2020). Ubuntu and consumer behaviour in African markets. African Journal of Business and Economic Research, 15(2), 112–128.

Nhidza, L. (2023). Religiosity, ancestry and luxury beauty consumption among affluent women in Zimbabwe. *Zimbabwe Journal of Business Research, 8*(2), 75–94.

Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. New York University Press.

Noble, S. U., & Sanders, M. (2023). Algorithmic bias, race, and digital visibility. New Media & Society.

Nyoni, T., & Zindi, B. (2023). Influencer credibility and consumer trust in Zimbabwean social media markets. *Journal of Digital Marketing in Africa, 5*(1), 22–39.

Nyoni, T., & Zindi, F. (2023). Social media influencer transparency and consumer engagement in Zimbabwe's beauty industry. Journal of African Digital Marketing, 5(1), 44–59.

Qin, Z., & Chen, P.-K. (2022). Enhancing the resilience of sustainable supplier management through the combination of win–win lean practices and auditing mechanisms—An analysis from the resource-based view. Frontiers in Environmental Science, 10. https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2022.962008

Ramose, M. B. (1999). African philosophy through Ubuntu. Harare: Mond Books.

Resnik, D. B. (2018). *The ethics of research with human subjects: Protecting people, advancing science, promoting trust*. Springer.

Resnik, D. B. (2018). The ethics of research with human subjects: Protecting people, advancing science, promoting trust. Springer.

Rooks, N. (2019). Color matters: Skin tone bias and the myth of a postracial America. Beacon Press.

Sarstedt, M., Hair, J. F., Cheah, J. H., Becker, J. M., & Ringle, C. M. (2020). How to specify, estimate, and validate higher-order constructs in PLS-SEM. Australasian Marketing Journal, 27(3), 197–211.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). Research methods for business students (8th ed.). Pearson Education.

Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2020). Celebrity vs influencer endorsements in advertising: The role of identification, credibility, and product-endorser fit. International Journal of Advertising, 39(2), 258–281.

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (7th ed.). Wiley.

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). Research methods for business: A skill-building approach (7th ed.). Wiley.

Sheppard, B. H., Hartwick, J., & Warshaw, P. R. (1988). The Theory of Reasoned Action: A meta-analysis of past research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*(3), 325–343.

Simons, H. (2011). *Case study research in practice*. SAGE Publications.

Simons, H. (2011). Case study research in practice. Sage Publications.

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote products: How source credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53*, 101742.

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53, 101742.

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). The role of influencers in the marketing mix: A review of the literature. Journal of Marketing Communications, 26(7), 1–17.

Truong, Y., Simmons, G., McColl, R., & Kitchen, P. J. (2010). Status and conspicuousness: Are they related? Strategic marketing implications for luxury brands. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 18*(3), 189–203.

Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. Doubleday.

Van Dijck, J., & Poell, T. (2022). Social media platforms and platform societies. Oxford University Press.

Venkatesh, V., Thong, J. Y. L., & Xu, X. (2012). Consumer acceptance and use of information technology: Extending the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. *MIS Quarterly, 36*(1), 157–178.

Vombatkere, K., et al. (2024). Characterizing engagement dynamics and algorithmic amplification on TikTok. Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference. **References**

Worthington, E. L., Wade, N. G., Hight, T. L., Ripley, J. S., McCullough, M. E., Berry, J. W., Schmitt, M. M., Berry, J. T., Bursley, K. H., & O'Connor, L. (2003). The Religious Commitment Inventory–10. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 50*(1), 84–96.

Zulli, D., & Zulli, D. J. (2020). Extending the internet meme: Conceptualizing technological mimesis and imitation publics on TikTok. *New Media & Society, 22*(4), 650–670.

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

QUESTIONNAIRE

To the Respondent

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am a Bindura University of Science Education student pursuing a Master of Science in Digital Marketing. I am carrying out this research to partially fulfil the requirements of my programme. The research seeks to examine the effects of religiosity, ubuntu value, aspirational social status, influencer authenticity, TikTok algorithm exposure, attitude towards bleaching/colourism, on consumer skin bleaching engagement and purchase intention in Zimbabwe.

Your participation is voluntary, and the information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire is highly appreciated.

Thank you

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Instructions: Please tick (✓) the most appropriate option.

A1. Gender

1. Male ☐ **2**. Female ☐

A2. Age group

1. ☐ 18

2. ☐ 19–24

3. ☐ 25–34

4. ☐ 35–44

5. ☐ 45–54

6. ☐ 55+

A3. Highest educational qualification

1. ☐ Primary

2. ☐ O-Level

3. ☐ A-Level

4. ☐ Diploma

5. ☐ Bachelor's

6. ☐ Master's

7. ☐ PhD

8. ☐ Other:_____

A4. Employment status

1. ☐ Employed

2. ☐ Self-employed

3. ☐ Student

4. ☐ Unemployed

5. ☐ Other:_____

A5. Average time spent on TikTok daily

1. ☐ Less than 30 minutes

2. ☐ 30–60 minutes

3. ☐ 1–2 hours

4. ☐ 2–4 hours

5. ☐ More than 4 hours

A6. Do you follow beauty/skincare influencers on TikTok?

1. ☐ Yes

2. ☐ No

A7. Have you ever bought a beauty product after seeing it on TikTok?

1. ☐ Yes

2. ☐ No

SECTION B : MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE (7-POINT LIKERT SCALE)

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale; (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

B1: Religiosity (RELI)

Definition: Religiosity refers to the extent of influence that religious beliefs, practices, and values have on an individual's attitudes and behaviours, including consumer decisions (Minton & Cabano, 2024).

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RELI1	My religious beliefs significantly influence my personal choices.							
RELI2	I regularly practice religious activities (e.g., worship, prayer).							
RELI3	My religion guides my attitudes toward consumption and products.							
RELI4	Religious values influence how I evaluate behaviour and products.							
RELI5	My faith community plays a role in shaping my beliefs about everyday decisions.							
RELI6	I turn to my religious teachings when making purchase decisions.							

B2: Ubuntu Values (UBUN)

Definition: Ubuntu values reflect the African philosophy emphasizing humanness, interconnectedness, compassion, and community harmony that influences social behaviour (Mutsonziwa, 2020).

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
UBUN1	I believe that all people are inherently human and connected to one another.							
UBUN2	I feel that personal decisions should consider the wellbeing of others.							
UBUN3	I act with compassion and concern for others' welfare.							
UBUN4	I experience a sense of shared identity with others in my community.							
UBUN5	I help others even when it requires personal sacrifice.							
UBUN6	I believe that community harmony matters more than individual gain.							

B3: Aspirational social status (ASP)

Definition: Aspirational social status reflects a consumer's motivation to purchase products that signal prestige and enhance their perceived social standing (Eastman et al., 1999; adapted).

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ASP1	I purchase products because they reflect my social status.							
ASP2	I am interested in products that signal prestige.							
ASP3	I would pay more for products that enhance my social image.							
ASP4	Products that signal higher status make me feel better about myself.							
ASP5	I seek products that other people admire for their status value.							
ASP6	I feel more confident when I use products associated with high social standing.							

B4: Influencer authenticity (INFA)

Definition: Influencer authenticity refers to the perceived genuineness, honesty, and trustworthiness of social media influencers, which affects consumer trust and engagement with influencer content (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Moulard, 2020).

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
INFA1	I believe the influencers I follow are genuine and honest.							
INFA2	The influencers I follow appear sincere in their product endorsements.							
INFA3	I trust that influencers share their true opinions about products.							
INFA4	Influencers I follow are authentic in their interactions with followers.							
INFA5	I perceive the influencers' content as trustworthy and credible.							
INFA6	Authenticity of influencers affects my willingness to engage with their product recommendations.							

B5: TikTok Algorithmic Exposure (TIKAE)

Definition: TikTok algorithmic exposure refers to the extent and influence of personalized content recommendations by TikTok's algorithm on consumers' product awareness and interest (De Vries et al. (2020)).

`Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TIKAE1	TikTok's algorithm frequently shows me content related to skin-lightening products.							
TIKAE2	I often discover new products through TikTok's recommendations.							
TIKAE3	The content TikTok shows me influences my interest in certain products.							
TIKAE4	I feel TikTok's algorithm personalizes my product-related content well.							
TIKAE5	TikTok exposure increases my likelihood to engage with product content.							
TIKAE6	TikTok's recommendations have introduced me to brands/products I otherwise would not know.							

B6: Attitude toward colourism (ATTIC)

Definition: Attitude toward colourism captures perceptions and biases related to skin tone differences and their social implications (Craddock, 2022; adapted).

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ATTIC1	People with lighter skin are treated more favourably in society.							
ATTIC2	I believe lighter skin is associated with beauty.							
ATTIC3	I think darker skin is perceived negatively by some people.							
ATTIC4	People are judged based on their skin tone.							
ATTIC5	Skin colour affects opportunities in life.							
ATTIC6	I believe skin tone influences social acceptance.							

B7: Consumer engagement (CE)

Definition: Consumer engagement measures the degree of interaction, involvement, and interest consumers have with digital content and brands online (Liang et al., 2024).

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CENGA1	I frequently interact (like, comment) with online content.							
CENGA2	I share content I find relevant.							
CENGA3	I follow content creators regularly.							
CENGA4	I spend considerable time engaging with product-related content.							
CENGA5	I discuss content I've seen with others.							
CENGA6	I seek additional content after viewing posts.							

B8: Purchase intention (PI)

Definition: Purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness and likelihood to purchase a product, reflecting planned future behaviour and serving as a key predictor of actual purchasing (Ajzen, 1991; Dodds et al., 1991).

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PURI1	I intend to purchase products I see promoted online.							
PURI2	I am likely to buy products recommended by influencers.							
PURI3	I will consider buying products seen on social media.							
PURI4	The probability I will buy these products is high.							
PURI5	I plan to buy if I see positive online content.							
PURI6	I would purchase products featured in influencer posts.							

Appendix 2:Similarity Report

Alwyn MUNATSWA

Examining the effects of religiosity, ubuntu, aspirational social status, skin bleaching influencer authenticity, TikTok algorith...

Dissertation Check

Document Details

Submission ID
trn:oid:::2945:393963078

Submission Date
Jun 17, 2026, 8:26 PM GMT+2

Download Date
Jun 17, 2026, 9:17 PM GMT+2

File Name
Examining the effects of religiosity, ubuntu, aspirational social status, skin bleaching influence....docx

File Size
1.1 MB

88 Pages

29,634 Words

171,880 Characters

turnitin Page 1 of 104 - Cover Page Submission ID trn:oid:::2945:393963078

Appendix 3:Similarity Report

11% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

Filtered from the Report

- Small Matches (less than 8 words)

Match Groups

- **269** Not Cited or Quoted 9%
  Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
- **52** Missing Quotations 2%
  Matches that are still very similar to source material
- **0** Missing Citation 0%
  Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
- **0** Cited and Quoted 0%
  Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

Top Sources

10% Internet sources
6% Publications
8% Submitted works (Student Papers)

Appendix 4:AI Report

Alwyn MUNATSWA

Examining the effects of religiosity, ubuntu, aspirational social status, skin bleaching influencer authenticity, TikTok algorith...

Dissertation Check

Document Details

Submission ID
trn:oid:::2945:393963078

Submission Date
Jun 17, 2026, 8:26 PM GMT+2

Download Date
Jun 17, 2026, 8:31 PM GMT+2

File Name
Examining the effects of religiosity, ubuntu, aspirational social status, skin bleaching influence....docx

File Size
1.1 MB

88 Pages

29,634 Words

171,880 Characters

Appendix 5:AI Report

*% detected as AI

AI detection includes the possibility of false positives. Although some text in this submission is likely AI generated, scores below the 20% threshold are not surfaced because they have a higher likelihood of false positives.

Caution: Review required.

It is essential to understand the limitations of AI detection before making decisions about a student's work. We encourage you to learn more about Turnitin's AI detection capabilities before using the tool.

Disclaimer

Our AI writing assessment is designed to help educators identify text that might be prepared by a generative AI tool. Our AI writing assessment may not always be accurate (i.e., our AI models may produce either false positive results or false negative results), so it should not be used as the sole basis for adverse actions against a student. It takes further scrutiny and human judgment in conjunction with an organization's application of its specific academic policies to determine whether any academic misconduct has occurred.

Appendix 6:AI Report

Alwyn MUNATSWA

CHAPTER FIVE

Dissertation Check

Document Details

Submission ID
trn:oid:::2945:394158797

Submission Date
Jun 18, 2026, 7:05 PM GMT+2

Download Date
Jun 18, 2026, 7:07 PM GMT+2

File Name
CHAPTER FIVE.docx

File Size
18.7 KB

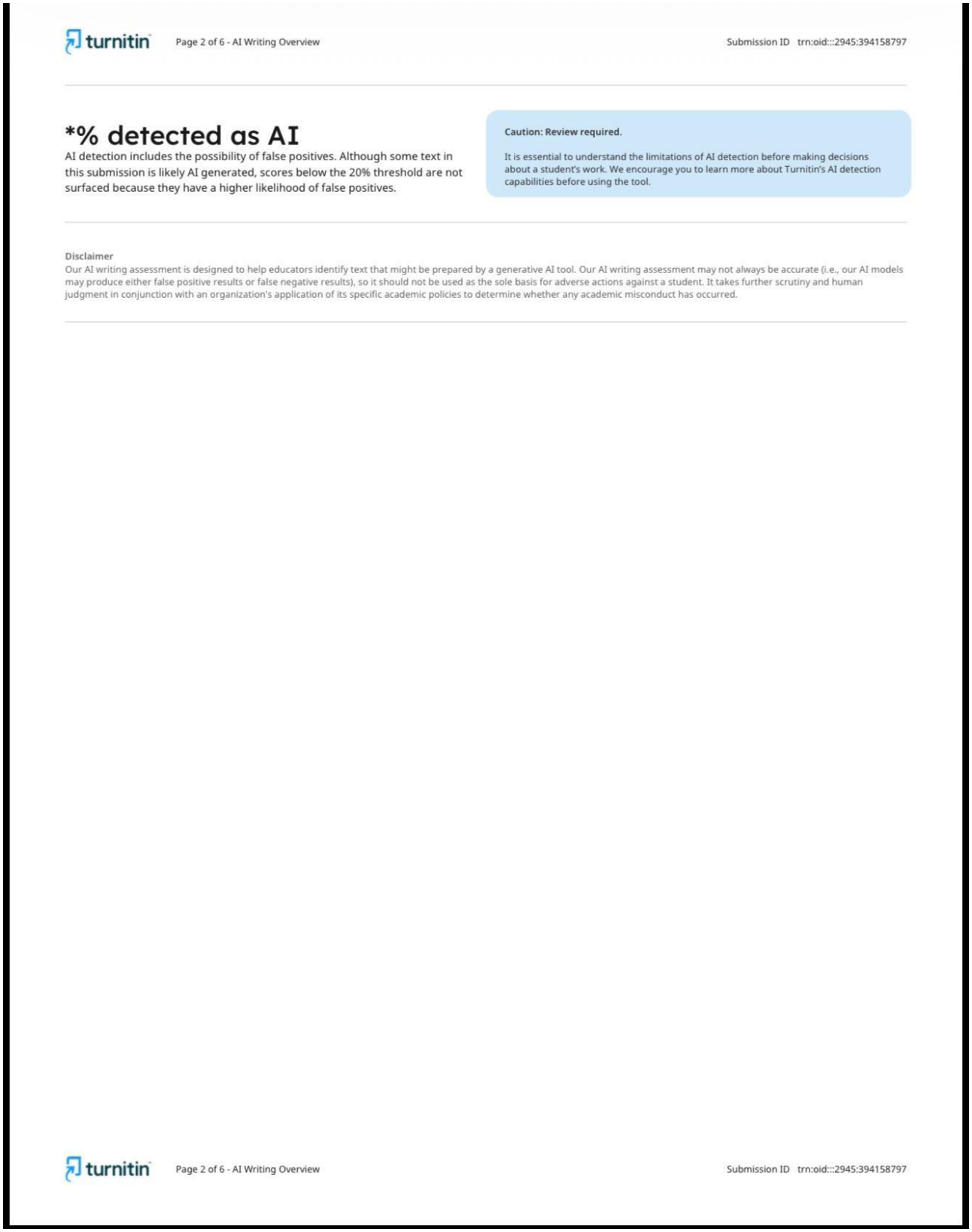
4 Pages

1,217 Words

7,640 Characters

turnitin Page 1 of 6 - Cover Page Submission ID trn:oid:::2945:394158797

Appendix 7:AI Report



turnitin Page 2 of 6 - AI Writing Overview Submission ID trn:oid:::2945:394158797

*% detected as AI

AI detection includes the possibility of false positives. Although some text in this submission is likely AI generated, scores below the 20% threshold are not surfaced because they have a higher likelihood of false positives.

Caution: Review required.

It is essential to understand the limitations of AI detection before making decisions about a student's work. We encourage you to learn more about Turnitin's AI detection capabilities before using the tool.

Disclaimer

Our AI writing assessment is designed to help educators identify text that might be prepared by a generative AI tool. Our AI writing assessment may not always be accurate (i.e., our AI models may produce either false positive results or false negative results), so it should not be used as the sole basis for adverse actions against a student. It takes further scrutiny and human judgment in conjunction with an organization's application of its specific academic policies to determine whether any academic misconduct has occurred.

turnitin Page 2 of 6 - AI Writing Overview Submission ID trn:oid:::2945:394158797