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The Influence of Storytelling Marketing and Narrative Transportation on Scarlett Whitening Purchase Decisions: The Mediating Role of Emotional Appeal among Reizuka Ari's TikTok Viewers

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital marketing has transformed brand–consumer communication, particularly on social media platforms such as TikTok, where narrative-based interactions and emotional experiences increasingly shape consumer behavior. However, limited research has examined the emotional mechanisms through which storytelling marketing and narrative transportation influence purchase decisions in TikTok influencer marketing. This study investigates the effects of storytelling marketing and narrative transportation on Scarlett Whitening purchase decisions through the mediating role of emotional appeal among viewers of Reizuka Ari's TikTok content. A quantitative explanatory design was employed using survey data from 300 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings demonstrate that storytelling marketing and narrative transportation have significant positive effects on both emotional appeal and purchase decisions. Emotional appeal partially mediates the effects of storytelling

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marketing and narrative transportation on purchase decisions. The model explains 67.3% of the variance in emotional appeal and 74.8% of the variance in purchase decisions. These findings establish narrative-based communication and emotional engagement as important determinants of consumer decision-making in digital influencer marketing. The study extends Narrative Transportation Theory by demonstrating the role of emotional appeal in short-form video marketing and provides practical guidance for brands and influencers seeking to develop authentic, emotionally engaging, and consumer-centered marketing strategies.

Keywords: Emotional Appeal; Influencer Marketing; Narrative Transportation; Purchase Decisions; Storytelling Marketing

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the contemporary marketing landscape by changing the way brands communicate, engage, and establish relationships with consumers. Traditional marketing approaches that previously relied on one-way communication have gradually shifted toward interactive, personalized, and data-driven marketing practices. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of promotional information; instead, they actively search, evaluate, and share information according to their interests, experiences, and social environments. Digital marketing has therefore developed beyond the simple adoption of digital channels, becoming a strategic approach that integrates technology, consumer insights, and relationship-building processes to achieve sustainable marketing outcomes (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). This transformation is also aligned with the concept of Marketing 5.0, which emphasizes the integration between technological innovation and human values to create personalized and emotionally meaningful consumer experiences (Kotler et al., 2021).

The development of digital marketing has encouraged businesses to adopt communication strategies that prioritize engagement, authenticity, and consumer participation. Digital platforms allow brands to establish direct interactions with audiences while simultaneously collecting behavioral insights that support more relevant marketing activities. The effectiveness of digital marketing lies not only in its ability to distribute information but also in creating meaningful connections through personalized communication and consumer involvement (Chaffey & Smith, 2022). In this context, content marketing has become an important approach because valuable, informative, and

entertaining content can strengthen consumer trust and long-term relationships rather than relying solely on direct promotional messages (Content Marketing Institute, 2023).

Among various digital platforms, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential social media environments for contemporary marketing communication. The platform combines entertainment, user-generated content, algorithm-based personalization, and commercial activities within an integrated digital ecosystem. This condition enables brands and influencers to deliver marketing messages through creative narratives that are more natural and less intrusive. The increasing dominance of influencer-based communication demonstrates that digital consumers tend to respond more positively to personalized recommendations and authentic experiences rather than conventional advertising approaches (Okonkwo & Namkoisse, 2025). Furthermore, video-based storytelling formats have been found to generate higher engagement because narrative structures encourage audiences to maintain attention and emotionally connect with marketing messages (Coker et al., 2021).

The beauty industry represents one of the sectors that has significantly benefited from digital transformation, particularly through influencer marketing strategies. Scarlett Whitening, an Indonesian local beauty brand established in 2017, has developed its market presence through digital-based marketing activities and online consumer engagement. The brand focuses on skincare and beauty products while utilizing digital communication channels to reach broader audiences. In a highly competitive beauty market, influencer collaboration has become an important strategy because consumers often perceive recommendations from trusted influencers as more authentic and credible compared with direct brand advertisements (Fernandes & Moreira, 2024). In addition, research on TikTok influencer marketing indicates that storytelling-based promotional content can strengthen consumer perception and improve brand communication effectiveness within digital environments (Huang, 2025).

One of the most significant developments in influencer marketing is the increasing adoption of storytelling marketing as a persuasive communication strategy. Instead of presenting products through explicit promotional claims, influencers integrate products into personal experiences, daily routines, and emotional journeys. Storytelling marketing enables brands to communicate symbolic meanings and values beyond functional product attributes, allowing consumers to develop deeper psychological connections with brands (Escalas,

2004). Effective storytelling strategies can strengthen brand identity by creating narratives that represent consumer aspirations and experiences (Fog et al., 2010). Furthermore, storytelling in digital commerce environments has been shown to influence consumer perceptions, user experiences, and behavioral intentions by making marketing communication more engaging and meaningful (Karampournioti & Wiedmann, 2022).

The researcher argues that understanding consumer purchasing decisions within the TikTok ecosystem requires examining not only the content delivered by influencers but also the psychological processes that occur when audiences interact with digital narratives. Reizuka Ari represents an interesting research context because her TikTok content is characterized by personal storytelling, authentic communication, and emotional narratives rather than direct promotional messages. Her ability to incorporate product recommendations into personal experiences creates a communication pattern where audiences may perceive promotional content as genuine recommendations. Previous research highlights that emotional engagement within storytelling experiences plays an important role in strengthening consumer involvement and relationship formation with brands (Ahmed et al., 2024). Therefore, examining storytelling mechanisms in influencer marketing provides important insights into how digital communication influences consumer behavior.

Previous studies have demonstrated that storytelling marketing contributes to consumer engagement by creating meaningful narratives that connect brands with individual experiences. Mavilinda et al. (2023) found that storytelling-based branding strategies can stimulate emotional responses among consumers in digital environments. Similarly, consumer storytelling research shows that narratives influence brand attitudes through emotional and cognitive processes, demonstrating that stories function as important mechanisms in shaping consumer perceptions (Hong et al., 2022). Emotional factors are also essential in consumer decision-making because emotions influence evaluations, preferences, and behavioral intentions toward products and brands (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Research on emotional advertising appeals further confirms that emotional elements significantly contribute to stronger consumer responses and purchasing behavior (Gribanova et al., 2023).

However, a research gap remains in previous literature. Existing studies have frequently examined influencer marketing, storytelling marketing, emotional appeal, and consumer behavior as separate research domains. Limited studies have simultaneously

investigated how storytelling marketing and narrative transportation operate through emotional appeal to influence purchasing decisions within the TikTok influencer marketing context. Narrative Transportation Theory explains that individuals can become cognitively, emotionally, and imaginatively immersed in narratives, resulting in stronger acceptance of persuasive messages (Green & Brock, 2000). Although narrative transportation has been extensively studied in traditional storytelling contexts, its application within short-video influencer marketing remains an emerging research area that requires further investigation (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009).

This study addresses the identified research gap by developing an integrated framework that explains how influencer storytelling influences consumer purchasing decisions through psychological mechanisms. The novelty of this research lies in combining storytelling marketing, narrative transportation, and emotional appeal into a unified model within the context of TikTok influencer marketing in Indonesia. Narrative Transportation Theory provides the theoretical foundation for explaining how audiences become immersed in digital narratives and experience changes in attitudes and behavioral intentions (Gerrig, 1993). Recent theoretical developments also emphasize that narratives influence how individuals interpret experiences, construct meanings, and respond emotionally to persuasive communication (Green & Appel, 2024).

Furthermore, previous research indicates that imagination and narrative involvement contribute significantly to transportation experiences and purchase intentions, demonstrating the importance of psychological engagement in digital marketing communication (Grigsby et al., 2023). Storytelling effects also vary depending on narrative structures and communication contexts, suggesting that understanding different storytelling mechanisms is essential for developing effective marketing strategies (Kaczorowska et al., 2025). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of storytelling marketing and narrative transportation on purchasing decisions for Scarlett Whitening products through emotional appeal among Reizuka Ari's TikTok viewers. Theoretically, this research contributes to digital marketing literature by expanding understanding of influencer-based persuasion mechanisms in short-video platforms. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for marketers and businesses in designing authentic, emotionally engaging, and consumer-centered digital communication strategies.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The quantitative approach was selected because the research aims to empirically examine causal relationships among variables through hypothesis testing based on a structured theoretical framework. The study applied a survey method by distributing structured questionnaires to respondents who met predetermined research criteria. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS version 4.0. This analytical technique was selected because it is appropriate for examining complex structural models involving multiple latent constructs and mediation relationships simultaneously. The research adopted a non-experimental design because the researcher did not manipulate any variables but observed and analyzed naturally occurring phenomena. Furthermore, data collection was conducted using a cross-sectional design, in which information was gathered within a specific period to represent the conditions of the investigated variables.

The research design was developed to examine the influence of storytelling marketing and narrative transportation on purchasing decisions for Scarlett Whitening products through emotional appeal as a mediating variable. The research model consisted of two independent variables, namely storytelling marketing (X1) and narrative transportation (X2), one mediating variable, namely emotional appeal (Z), and one dependent variable, namely purchasing decision (Y). Each construct was operationalized through theoretically derived indicators to ensure measurable and systematic assessment. Storytelling marketing was measured through five indicators: narrative structure, authenticity, relevance, value transmission, and emotional engagement. Narrative transportation was measured through cognitive attention, mental imagery, emotional involvement, narrative presence, and character identification. Meanwhile, emotional appeal was assessed through positive affective responses, empathy toward narratives, emotional trust, emotional connection with products, and affective motivation to act. The purchasing decision variable was measured through product confidence, decision-making speed, purchase certainty, product suitability with personal needs, and willingness to recommend the product to others.

The participants in this study were active viewers or followers of Reizuka Ari on TikTok who had previously encountered promotional content related to Scarlett Whitening products. The population was considered unlimited (infinite population) because the number

of active viewers was continuously changing and distributed across various regions in Indonesia. The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling, in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. A total of 300 respondents participated in this study. The inclusion criteria required respondents to be active TikTok users, have watched Reizuka Ari's content, have been exposed to Scarlett Whitening promotional content, have purchased or considered purchasing the promoted product, be at least 17 years old, and reside in Indonesia.

The research instrument was an online structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. Primary data were collected from respondents' perceptions regarding the four research constructs: storytelling marketing, narrative transportation, emotional appeal, and purchasing decisions. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Before the main survey distribution, a pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted to evaluate the clarity, validity, and reliability of the questionnaire items. Data collection was conducted online through TikTok interactions, follower communities, and respondent networks to reach qualified participants efficiently. The research process was conducted in 2025, covering the stages of instrument preparation, pilot testing, questionnaire distribution, and statistical analysis.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS version 4.0. The analysis consisted of two major stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). The outer model assessment was conducted to examine instrument validity and reliability, while the inner model assessment was used to evaluate relationships among constructs, including coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and hypothesis testing. Hypothesis testing was conducted through bootstrapping procedures by examining path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values to determine the significance of direct relationships and indirect effects through the mediating variable.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 300 respondents who were active viewers of Reizuka Ari's TikTok content and met the predetermined inclusion criteria. The demographic profile

indicates that the respondents were predominantly female, with 189 respondents (63.0%), while male respondents accounted for 111 respondents (37.0%). In terms of age, respondents aged 23–28 years represented the largest group, accounting for 136 respondents (45.3%). This was followed by respondents aged 17–22 years (24.3%), 29–34 years (23.0%), 35–40 years (5.7%), and those above 40 years (1.7%).

Regarding educational background, respondents with a bachelor's degree constituted the largest proportion (41.0%), followed by those with senior high school education (38.3%). In terms of occupation, private-sector employees represented the largest group at 36.2%, followed by respondents classified as students, university students, and homemakers (26.6%). The income distribution was relatively dispersed across the categories, with the largest proportion earning between IDR 1.5 million and IDR 3 million per month (25.5%).

The respondents also demonstrated relatively high exposure to TikTok content. Approximately 68.0% had used TikTok for more than one year, while 49.0% reported watching Reizuka Ari's content three to five times. Furthermore, 94.0% of respondents reported having purchased or at least considered purchasing products promoted by the influencer. Skincare was the most frequently purchased product category (34.8%), followed by snacks (25.3%) and fragrance products (22.3%).

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Charateristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	111	37
	Female	189	63
Age	17–22 years	73	24.3
	23–28 years	136	45.3
	29–34 years	69	23.0
	35–40 years	17	5.7
	>40 years	5	1.7
Education	Senior High School	115	38.3
	Diploma 1–3	45	15.0
	Bachelor's degree	123	41.0
	Master's degree	15	5.0
	Others	2	0.6
Tiktok Usage	≤6 months	23	7.7
	6–12 months	73	24.3

Charateristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	>1 year	204	68.0
Viewing frequency	3–5 times	147	49.0
	5–7 times	97	32.3
	>7 times	56	18.7

Source: Primary data processed by the authors (2026)

Based on Table 1. Respondent Profile presents the characteristics of the 300 respondents involved in the study. In terms of gender, female respondents dominated the sample, accounting for 63%, while male respondents represented 37%. Regarding age, the largest proportion of respondents was aged 23–28 years (45.3%), followed by those aged 17–22 years (24.3%), 29–34 years (23.0%), 35–40 years (5.7%), and above 40 years (1.7%). In terms of educational background, respondents with a Bachelor's degree constituted the largest group (41.0%), followed by Senior High School graduates (38.3%). With respect to TikTok usage, the majority of respondents had been using TikTok for more than one year (68.0%), while 24.3% had used it for 6–12 months and 7.7% for six months or less. In terms of viewing frequency, most respondents accessed or viewed TikTok content 3–5 times (49.0%), followed by 5–7 times (32.3%) and more than 7 times (18.7%). Overall, the respondent profile indicates that the sample was predominantly female, aged 23–28 years, had a Bachelor's degree, had used TikTok for more than one year, and viewed TikTok content 3–5 times.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the general tendency of respondents' perceptions toward the variables examined in the study. The measurement employed a five-point Likert scale, with mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 5.00. Scores between 2.61 and 3.40 were interpreted as moderate. The descriptive results indicate that all four constructs obtained mean scores within the moderate category.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables.

Charateristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Storytelling Marketing (X1)	Clear narrative structure	3.277	Moderate
	Authentic and natural story	3.090	Moderate
	Relevance to personal experience	3.260	Moderate
	Natural product integration	3.023	Moderate
	Emotional response	3.120	Moderate
	Overall Mean	3.154	Moderate

Charateristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Narrative Transportation (X2)	Cognitive attention	3.217	Moderate
	Mental imagery	3.013	Moderate
	Emotional involvement	3.267	Moderate
	Narrative presence	3.293	Moderate
	Character identification	3.290	Moderate
	Overall Mean	3.216	Moderate
Emotional Appeal (Z)	Positive affective response	3.290	Moderate
	Emotional relevance	3.387	Moderate
	Emotional trust	3.270	Moderate
	Emotional connection with product	3.177	Moderate
	Affective motivation to act	3.073	Moderate
	Overall Mean	3.239	Moderate
Purchase Decision (Y)	Confidence in product choice	3.060	Moderate
	Decision-making speed	3.153	Moderate
	Absence of purchase hesitation	3.320	Moderate
	Product–need congruence	3.310	Moderate
	Willingness to recommend	3.067	Moderate
	Overall Mean	3.182	Moderate

Source: Primary data processed by the authors (2026).

According the Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables, The results show that emotional appeal obtained the highest overall mean (3.239), followed by narrative transportation (3.216), purchase decision (3.182), and storytelling marketing (3.154). Within storytelling marketing, the highest-rated indicator concerned the clarity of the narrative structure (M = 3.277). For narrative transportation, narrative presence produced the highest score (M = 3.293). Emotional relevance represented the strongest dimension of emotional appeal (M = 3.387), whereas the highest-rated purchase decision indicator concerned the absence of hesitation when purchasing (M = 3.320). Although the mean scores remained within the moderate category, the subsequent PLS-SEM analysis demonstrated statistically significant relationships among all constructs. This indicates that moderate descriptive perceptions do not necessarily preclude meaningful structural relationships between the variables.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The assessment included convergent

validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. The model consisted of 20 indicators distributed equally across four constructs.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed using outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All 20 indicators demonstrated outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70. The values ranged from 0.818 to 0.901, indicating strong indicator reliability.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted

Constuct	AVE	Threshold	Decision
Storytelling Marketing (X1)	0.751	≥0.50	Valid
Narrative Transportation (X2)	0.732	≥0.50	Valid
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.753	≥0.50	Valid
Emotional Appeal (Z)	0.740	≥0.50	Valid

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026)

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted show that the AVE values for all constructs also exceeded the minimum criterion of 0.50. Purchase decision recorded the highest AVE (0.753), followed by storytelling marketing (0.751), emotional appeal (0.740), and narrative transportation (0.732). These findings confirm adequate convergent validity for all constructs.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Under the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with the other constructs.

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Constuct	X1	X2	Y	Z
Storytelling Marketing (X1)	0.867			
Narrative Transportation (X2)	0.588	0.855		
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.783	0.710	0.868	
Emotional Appeal (Z)	0.770	0.681	0.804	0.860

Note: Diagonal values represent the square root of AVE

Based on Table 4. Fornell–Larcker Criterion, The HTMT values ranged from 0.640 to 0.877, remaining below the commonly applied threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value was observed between emotional appeal and purchase decision (0.877), but it remained within the acceptable range. Thus, the constructs demonstrate satisfactory discriminant validity.

Table 5. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio

Constuct Relationship	HTMT
X1 ↔ X2	0.640
X1 ↔ Y	0.851
X2 ↔ Y	0.775
X1 ↔ Z	0.841
X2 ↔ Z	0.745
Z ↔ Y	0.877

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026)

According to Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio The HTMT results indicate that all construct relationships remain within the acceptable threshold. The HTMT values ranged from 0.640 to 0.877, with the highest value observed between Z and Y (0.877), followed by X1 and Y (0.851). Although these values are relatively high, they remain below the commonly applied threshold of 0.90, indicating that the constructs demonstrate adequate discriminant validity. Therefore, X1, X2, Y, and Z can be considered empirically distinct constructs in the research model.

Construct Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. All constructs achieved values considerably higher than the minimum threshold of 0.70. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.908 to 0.918, while composite reliability ranged from 0.932 to 0.939.

Table 6. Reliability Assessment

Constuct	Cronbach Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Decision
Storytelling Marketing	0.917	0.918	0.938	Reliable
Narrative Transportation	0.908	0.911	0.932	Reliable
Purchase Decision	0.918	0.920	0.939	Reliable
Emotional Appeal	0.912	0.914	0.934	Reliable

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026)

Table 6. Reliability Assessment , show that overall, the measurement model satisfies the required criteria for indicator reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency. Therefore, the structural model can be evaluated with adequate measurement quality.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated through R^2, effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and hypothesis testing. The results indicate substantial explanatory power for both endogenous constructs. Emotional appeal achieved an R^2 value of 0.673, indicating that 67.3% of its variance was explained jointly by storytelling marketing and narrative transportation. Meanwhile, purchase decision obtained an R^2 of 0.748, indicating that storytelling marketing, narrative transportation, and emotional appeal collectively explained 74.8% of the variance in purchase decision.

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Interpretation
Emotional Appeal (Z)	0.673	0.671	Substantial
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.748	0.745	Substantial

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026)

According Table 7. Coefficient of Determination (R^2), The effect-size analysis further indicates that storytelling marketing exerted the strongest contribution to emotional appeal, with an f^2 value of 0.640. The effect of narrative transportation on emotional appeal was moderate ($f^2 = 0.243$). Storytelling marketing also demonstrated a moderate effect on purchase decision ($f^2 = 0.207$), while narrative transportation produced an f^2 value of 0.143. The effect of emotional appeal on purchase decision was particularly strong.

Table 8. Effect Size (f^2)

Structural Relationship	f^2	Interpretation
Storytelling Marketing → Emotional Appeal	0.640	Large
Narrative Transportation → Emotional Appeal	0.243	Medium
Storytelling Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.207	Medium
Narrative Transportation → Purchase Decision	0.143	Small–Medium
Emotional Appeal → Purchase Decision	1.822	Very Large

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026).

Table 8. Effect Size (f^2) show that predictive relevance was also established because all Q^2predict values for the endogenous constructs were positive. The average Q^2predict values were 0.492 for emotional appeal and 0.528 for purchase decision, indicating strong predictive relevance of the model.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses H1–H5 were tested using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples in SmartPLS 4. A relationship was considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeded 1.960 and the p-value was below 0.05. All five direct-effect hypotheses were supported.

Table 9. Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1	Storytelling Marketing → Emotional Appeal	0.566	13.368	<0.001	Supported
H2	Narrative Transportation → Emotional Appeal	0.349	7.346	<0.001	Supported
H3	Emotional Appeal → Purchase Decision	0.804	38.055	<0.001	Supported
H4	Storytelling Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.455	12.484	<0.001	Supported
H5	Narrative Transportation → Purchase Decision	0.280	7.074	<0.001	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026)

Based on Table 9. Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing, The findings demonstrate that storytelling marketing has a positive and statistically significant effect on emotional appeal ($\beta = 0.566$, $t = 13.368$, $p < 0.001$). Narrative transportation also positively affects emotional appeal ($\beta = 0.349$, $t = 7.346$, $p < 0.001$). Among the direct relationships, emotional appeal demonstrated the strongest association with purchase decision ($\beta = 0.804$, $t = 38.055$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, storytelling marketing ($\beta = 0.455$, $t = 12.484$, $p < 0.001$) and narrative transportation ($\beta = 0.280$, $t = 7.074$, $p < 0.001$) both exerted significant positive effects on purchase decision. These results provide empirical support for H1 through H5.

Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of emotional appeal was examined using the specific indirect-effects procedure with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Both indirect relationships were statistically significant, supporting H6 and H7.

Table 10. Indirect Effects and Mediation Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H6	Storytelling Marketing → Emotional Appeal → Purchase Decision	0.196	5.504	<0.001	Supported
H7	Narrative Transportation → Emotional Appeal → Purchase Decision	0.121	4.698	<0.001	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026).

According to Table 11. Indirect Effects and Mediation Testing, The indirect effect of storytelling marketing on purchase decision through emotional appeal was 0.196 and statistically significant ($t = 5.504$, $p < 0.001$). Because the direct effect of storytelling marketing on purchase decision remained significant, emotional appeal functions as a partial mediator in this relationship. Similarly, narrative transportation exhibited a significant indirect effect on purchase decision through emotional appeal ($\beta = 0.121$, $t = 4.698$, $p < 0.001$), while its direct effect remained significant. Therefore, emotional appeal also acts as a partial mediator between narrative transportation and purchase decision.

Table 11. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect via Emotional Appeal	Total Effect	Mediation Type
Storytelling Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.362	0.196	0.558	Partial
Narrative Transportation → Purchase Decision	0.261	0.121	0.382	Partial

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026).

Table 11. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects show that the mediation results indicate that approximately 35.1% of the total effect of storytelling marketing on purchase decision operates through emotional appeal, while approximately 31.7% of the total effect of narrative transportation on purchase decision is transmitted through emotional appeal. Thus, the findings demonstrate that emotional responses represent an important mechanism through which narrative-based marketing stimuli are translated into consumer purchase decisions.

Overall Findings

Taken together, the empirical results provide consistent evidence for all seven proposed hypotheses. Storytelling marketing and narrative transportation significantly enhance emotional appeal, while emotional appeal, storytelling marketing, and narrative transportation significantly contribute to purchase decisions. Moreover, emotional appeal

serves as a significant partial mediator in both relationships involving storytelling marketing and narrative transportation.

Table 12. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Proposed Relationship	β / Indirect Effect	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result
H1	Storytelling Marketing → Emotional Appeal	0.566	13.368	<0.001	Supported
H2	Narrative Transportation → Emotional Appeal	0.349	7.346	<0.001	Supported
H3	Emotional Appeal → Purchase Decision	0.804	38.055	<0.001	Supported
H4	Storytelling Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.455	12.484	<0.001	Supported
H5	Narrative Transportation → Purchase Decision	0.280	7.074	<0.001	Supported
H6	Storytelling Marketing → Emotional Appeal → Purchase Decision	0.196	5.504	<0.001	Supported; Partial Mediation
H7	Narrative Transportation → Emotional Appeal → Purchase Decision	0.121	4.698	<0.001	Supported; Partial Mediation

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, processed by the authors (2026).

Overall in Table 12. Summary of Hypothesis Testing, the structural model demonstrates substantial explanatory capacity, with R^2 values of 0.673 for emotional appeal and 0.748 for purchase decision. The findings further reveal that storytelling marketing represents the strongest antecedent of emotional appeal, whereas emotional appeal represents the strongest direct predictor of purchase decision. The significant indirect effects additionally confirm that emotional appeal is not merely an outcome of narrative-based marketing communication but also functions as an important psychological pathway connecting content characteristics with consumers' purchase decisions.

DISCUSSION

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the mechanisms through which storytelling marketing and narrative transportation influence consumer purchasing decisions through emotional appeal in the context of TikTok influencer marketing. Based on the analysis using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) involving 300 active viewers of Reizuka Ari's TikTok content, all proposed relationships were found to be

significant. The findings demonstrate that storytelling marketing and narrative transportation are not only capable of directly influencing purchasing decisions but also contribute to consumer responses through emotional mechanisms. The explanatory power of the structural model is indicated by the R^2 value of 0.673 for emotional appeal and 0.748 for purchasing decisions, suggesting that the proposed model explains 67.3% of the variance in emotional appeal and 74.8% of the variance in purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that narrative-based communication strategies within TikTok influencer marketing have substantial predictive capability in explaining consumer decision-making processes.

The significant influence of storytelling marketing on emotional appeal indicates that the effectiveness of influencer marketing is strongly associated with the ability to construct meaningful and emotionally engaging narratives. In this study, storytelling marketing was measured through narrative structure, authenticity, relevance, value transmission, and emotional engagement. Although the overall perception of storytelling marketing was categorized as moderate, with an average score of 3.154, the findings indicate that audiences still recognize the importance of narrative elements in shaping emotional responses. The highest-rated indicator was narrative structure (3.277), suggesting that a coherent storyline plays an important role in helping audiences follow and interpret influencer messages. Meanwhile, the relatively lower score of natural product integration (3.023) suggests that audiences may still distinguish between authentic storytelling and content perceived as commercially driven. This finding supports Escalas (2004), who argued that narratives enable consumers to build meaningful connections with brands by transforming product information into personally relevant experiences.

Furthermore, narrative transportation was also found to have a significant positive effect on emotional appeal. This finding demonstrates that when audiences become cognitively and emotionally immersed in influencer narratives, they are more likely to develop affective responses toward the promoted product. The overall mean score of narrative transportation was 3.216, indicating a moderate level of audience involvement. The highest indicators were narrative presence (3.293) and character identification (3.290), suggesting that audiences tend to respond positively when they perceive similarities or emotional connections with the influencer's experiences. This result reinforces the principles of Narrative Transportation Theory, which explains that individuals who become immersed in narratives are more likely to experience emotional engagement and persuasive influence (Green & Brock, 2000).

The significant relationship between emotional appeal and purchasing decisions confirms the important role of affective responses in consumer decision-making. Emotional appeal obtained an overall mean score of 3.239, categorized as moderate, indicating that emotional responses generated from influencer content contribute to consumer evaluations of the promoted product. The strongest indicator was empathy toward the narrative (3.387), demonstrating that consumers are more likely to respond when promotional content reflects relatable emotions and personal experiences. However, affective motivation to seek information or purchase the product showed the lowest score (3.073), suggesting that emotional engagement does not automatically translate into immediate purchasing action. This supports the perspective of Affect-as-Information Theory, which suggests that emotions function as important information sources in decision-making but are not the only determinants of consumer behavior.

The findings also reveal that storytelling marketing and narrative transportation directly influence purchasing decisions, while emotional appeal partially mediates these relationships. The partial mediation effect indicates that consumers may purchase products not only because of emotional reactions generated by influencer content but also because the narrative itself provides persuasive value. This finding expands previous research by demonstrating that emotional appeal functions as one mechanism within a broader persuasion process rather than the sole explanation of consumer decisions. The results are consistent with Hong et al. (2022), who emphasized that consumer storytelling influences brand attitudes through both emotional and cognitive pathways.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to digital marketing literature by extending the application of Narrative Transportation Theory into the context of short-video influencer marketing in Indonesia. Previous studies have primarily examined narrative transportation in traditional media contexts, while this study demonstrates its relevance within TikTok's algorithm-driven and interactive environment. The integrated model combining storytelling marketing, narrative transportation, emotional appeal, and purchasing decisions provides a more comprehensive explanation of how influencer communication produces consumer responses. The high R^2 value of purchasing decisions (0.748) further indicates that the proposed framework has strong explanatory capability.

Practically, the findings provide important implications for brands and influencers. Since storytelling marketing demonstrated a strong contribution to purchasing decisions,

brands should prioritize collaboration with influencers who possess authentic storytelling abilities rather than focusing solely on follower numbers or engagement metrics. Influencers should maintain personal and relatable narratives because authenticity strengthens consumer trust and emotional involvement. The findings also suggest that marketers should provide influencers with creative freedom to integrate products naturally into their personal stories, as excessive promotional framing may reduce perceived authenticity.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research only examined viewers of one TikTok influencer, Reizuka Ari, meaning that the findings should be generalized cautiously because different influencers may have different storytelling styles, audience characteristics, and levels of credibility. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaire data may introduce subjective bias and social desirability bias. Third, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to observe changes in consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior over time. Future studies may therefore expand the research context by involving multiple influencers, adopting longitudinal approaches, incorporating qualitative methods, and examining additional variables such as influencer credibility or parasocial relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the influence of storytelling marketing and narrative transportation on purchasing decisions for Scarlett Whitening products through emotional appeal among Reizuka Ari's TikTok viewers. Based on Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis involving 300 respondents who were active viewers of Reizuka Ari's TikTok content, the findings demonstrate that narrative-based communication strategies play an important role in shaping consumer emotional responses and purchasing behavior. The results confirm that storytelling marketing and narrative transportation have significant positive effects on emotional appeal, while emotional appeal significantly influences purchasing decisions. Furthermore, both storytelling marketing and narrative transportation directly affect purchasing decisions, with emotional appeal functioning as a partial mediator in these relationships.

The explanatory capability of the research model is reflected through the coefficient of determination (R^2). The model explains 67.3% of the variance in emotional appeal ($R^2 = 0.673$) through storytelling marketing and narrative transportation, while it explains 74.8% of the variance in purchasing decisions ($R^2 = 0.748$). These findings indicate that consumer

purchasing decisions within TikTok influencer marketing environments are not solely determined by product-related information but are also shaped by narrative experiences and emotional involvement generated through influencer communication.

Theoretically, this research contributes to digital marketing studies by extending the application of Narrative Transportation Theory within the context of short-video influencer marketing in Indonesia. The study provides empirical evidence regarding the integrated role of storytelling marketing, narrative transportation, and emotional appeal in explaining consumer decision-making processes. Practically, the findings suggest that brands and digital marketers should prioritize influencers who possess strong storytelling capabilities and authentic communication styles rather than relying only on follower numbers or engagement metrics. Influencer collaborations should emphasize meaningful narratives that create emotional connections with audiences.

However, this study has several limitations. The research focused only on one TikTok influencer, Reizuka Ari, which limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader influencer marketing ecosystem. Additionally, the use of self-reported questionnaire data and a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to observe long-term changes in consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. Future research is recommended to involve multiple influencers with different characteristics, incorporate additional variables such as influencer credibility and parasocial relationships, and apply longitudinal or qualitative approaches to provide deeper insights into the development of emotional appeal and purchasing decisions in digital marketing contexts.

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