

Constructing Meaning in Local Product Consumption through TikTok Affiliate Content: A Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis in the Social Commerce Ecosystem

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the construction of meaning in local product consumption within TikTok Affiliate content and to identify how visual and verbal signs shape the meaning of consumption in the social commerce ecosystem. **Method:** This study employs a qualitative approach using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis through three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. The data consist of 15 TikTok Affiliate contents promoting local products across the categories of beauty and personal care, fashion, food and beverage, household, and lifestyle. The data were analyzed by identifying visual and verbal signs and their contextual use, followed by cross-case comparison to identify patterns in the construction of consumption meanings. **Results:** The findings indicate that local products are represented not only in terms of their material functions but also constructed as part of self-care, identity, functional value, consumption experiences, and lifestyle. At the level of myth, the relationship between personal needs and consumption is naturalized, making purchasing appear as a reasonable and relevant choice in consumers' everyday lives. **Novelty:** This study demonstrates that TikTok Affiliate functions not merely as a promotional and transactional channel but also as a space for the production of consumption meanings, where the functional value of local products is transformed into symbolic meanings through representation, experience, demonstration, and persuasive narratives. These findings extend social commerce scholarship by positioning the construction of meaning as an important dimension of consumption persuasion.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed the way people interact with products, brands, and commercial activities. Social media no longer functions solely as a space for information sharing and social relationship building but has become increasingly integrated with commercial activities. This development has given rise to social commerce, a commercial environment that combines the characteristics of social media with processes of information search, interaction, recommendation, and transaction. In this context, consumers do not merely receive information from sellers but also interact with content and recommendations that can shape how they understand and evaluate products [1], [2].

This phenomenon can be observed on TikTok, which combines short-form videos, social interaction, entertainment, and commercial activities. In Indonesia, TikTok had a potential advertising reach of 108 million users aged 18 and above in early 2025, demonstrating the platform's substantial audience for digital communication and marketing activities [3]. Within the social commerce ecosystem, TikTok enables users to move from viewing content to searching for and purchasing products. Research on TikTok Shop in Indonesia indicates that information quality, trust, interaction, and

economic factors are associated with social commerce usage and consumer behavior [4], [5].

One mechanism that strengthens the relationship between content and commercial activities is affiliate marketing. Through affiliate programs, creators introduce and recommend products to audiences through the content they produce, while product links or shopping carts enable audiences to proceed directly toward purchasing. Unlike conventional advertising, commercial messages in affiliate content can be conveyed through personal experiences, reviews, demonstrations, tutorials, recommendations, and product-use narratives. Previous research indicates that content entertainment, product informativeness, and source credibility are associated with purchase intention in the context of TikTok Affiliate [6], while affiliate marketing and online customer reviews are also associated with purchasing decisions among TikTok Shop users [7].

Nevertheless, research on TikTok Affiliate has largely focused on the effectiveness of content in encouraging purchase intention and purchasing decisions [5], [6], [7], [8]. This perspective is important for understanding the effectiveness of digital marketing, but it does not fully explain how products are assigned meaning through their representation in digital content. Creators do not merely communicate product characteristics but also select particular words, visuals, expressions, demonstrations, and usage contexts. These choices enable products to be understood through meanings that extend beyond their material functions.

From this perspective, consumption is understood not merely as an economic activity but also as an activity of meaning-making. Products can be associated with identity, comfort, quality, experience, efficiency, and lifestyle. Research on consumption culture in TikTok Shop indicates that consumption patterns through videos and product reviews are associated with lifestyle and the symbolic meanings of goods [9]. However, such studies have not specifically examined the construction of consumption meanings of local products in TikTok Affiliate content through the systems of denotation, connotation, and myth.

This issue becomes particularly important when the object of study is local products. In a competitive digital commerce environment, local products need not only to gain visibility but also to acquire meanings that are relevant to consumers' everyday lives. Through affiliate content, products can be represented as practical, high-quality, authentic, economical, modern, or compatible with particular lifestyles. These meanings are not inherent solely in the products themselves but are constructed through the ways in which products are displayed, used, and discussed.

To understand this process, this study employs Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. Barthes' framework enables analysis to move from denotation, referring to the literal meaning of signs, to connotation, referring to associative meanings, and ultimately to myth, referring to the process through which particular cultural constructions are naturalized and presented as self-evident or normal [10], [11]. In TikTok content, product

packaging, creators' expressions, product-use demonstrations, word choices, on-screen text, and calls to purchase can be understood as signs that construct meanings extending beyond their literal functions [12].

Accordingly, this study views TikTok Affiliate not merely as a channel for promotion and transactions but as a communication space in which meanings of consumption are produced. This study aims to analyze the construction of consumption meanings of local products in TikTok Affiliate content using Roland Barthes' semiotics by identifying visual and verbal signs, analyzing denotative and connotative meanings, uncovering myths naturalized through product representations, and formulating the forms of consumption meaning construction that emerge within the social commerce ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. This approach is used to understand the construction of meaning in digital content contextually rather than to statistically examine relationships between variables. Barthes' semiotic analysis is applied to identify meaning at three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth, enabling the visual and verbal signs in the content to be traced from their literal meanings to their social and cultural meanings [13], [14], [15], [16]. The study is not intended to measure the effect of TikTok Affiliate on purchasing decisions but rather to explain how product representations in affiliate content construct meanings of consumption.

The object of this study is TikTok Affiliate content promoting Indonesian local products. The data consist of 15 videos across five categories: beauty and personal care, fashion, food and beverage, household, and lifestyle. The 15 products analyzed include Somethinc, Scarlett, NPURE, Azarine, Avoskin, Khalisa Muslimah, Erigo, Meccanism, 3SECOND, Heylocal, Realfood, Diseblakan.id, Bos Kriuk, LEKA, and Ortuseight. The diversity of categories was selected to enable comparisons of consumption meaning construction across different product contexts. Thus, the analysis does not focus solely on the characteristics of a single brand but also identifies patterns of signs and meanings that emerge across product categories.

The data were selected using purposive sampling based on criteria aligned with the objectives of the study [13]. Content was selected if it met the following criteria:

1. The content is a video published on TikTok;
2. It promotes products from Indonesian local brands;
3. It utilizes the TikTok Affiliate mechanism, indicated by access to the product page or shopping cart;
4. The creator actively introduces, explains, recommends, demonstrates, or persuades the audience regarding the product;
5. The content contains visual and/or verbal signs related to the product; and
6. The content is relevant to the construction of consumption meanings.

These criteria ensure that the data are not merely posts featuring local products but represent affiliate communication practices that connect product representation with potential consumption behavior.

Data were collected through non-participant observation and digital documentation. The researcher observed publicly available content without intervening in the creators' activities or the communication content. The documented information included video links, products, creator accounts, and relevant visual and verbal elements. Each video was observed repeatedly to identify signs, including product appearance and packaging; demonstrations or usage activities; creators' expressions and gestures; usage contexts; on-screen text; narration or spoken statements; product claims and evaluations; recommendations; and calls or directions toward purchase.

For relevant sections of the videos, the researcher recorded timestamps and captured screenshots as visual evidence for the analysis. This documentation was used to distinguish signs that actually appeared in the videos from the researcher's interpretations [17].

The data were analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework through three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth [14], [15], [16], [17]. First, sign identification was conducted by identifying visual and verbal elements in each video, such as products, packaging, expressions, gestures, demonstrations, creators' statements, on-screen text, claims, evaluations, and calls to purchase. Second, denotative analysis described the signs based on what was directly visible or audible in the videos without applying cultural interpretation. Third, connotative analysis interpreted the signs within their social and cultural contexts to identify associations such as comfort, beauty, identity, quality, efficiency, authenticity, health, experience, or lifestyle. Fourth, myth analysis identified cultural constructions that were naturalized through the relationship between denotative and connotative meanings. Myths were determined based on patterns of signs identified in the videos rather than being established prior to the analysis. Fifth, consumption meaning construction connected the findings from the denotative, connotative, and myth levels to explain how products were constructed as objects of consumption. A cross-case analysis was subsequently conducted to compare patterns of meaning across individual pieces of content and product categories.

Thus, the analytical process proceeds through the identification of signs, followed by an examination of their denotative and connotative meanings, the myths embedded within them, and the resulting construction of consumption meanings. The analysis does not stop at describing a product as "good," "practical," or "high quality," but instead explains how these signs construct particular reasons for consumption and present them as natural or reasonable choices.

This study uses publicly available TikTok content as its data source. The researcher did not interact with, manipulate, or intervene in the activities of creators or other users. The analysis was limited to communication materials relevant to the research objectives and did not use unnecessary personal information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of the five pieces of content shows that beauty and personal care products are constructed through personal needs, identity, problem-solving, value considerations, and self-care. The signs employed include product demonstrations, skin conditions, scent characteristics, product comparisons, creators' experiences, as well as product claims and calls to purchase.

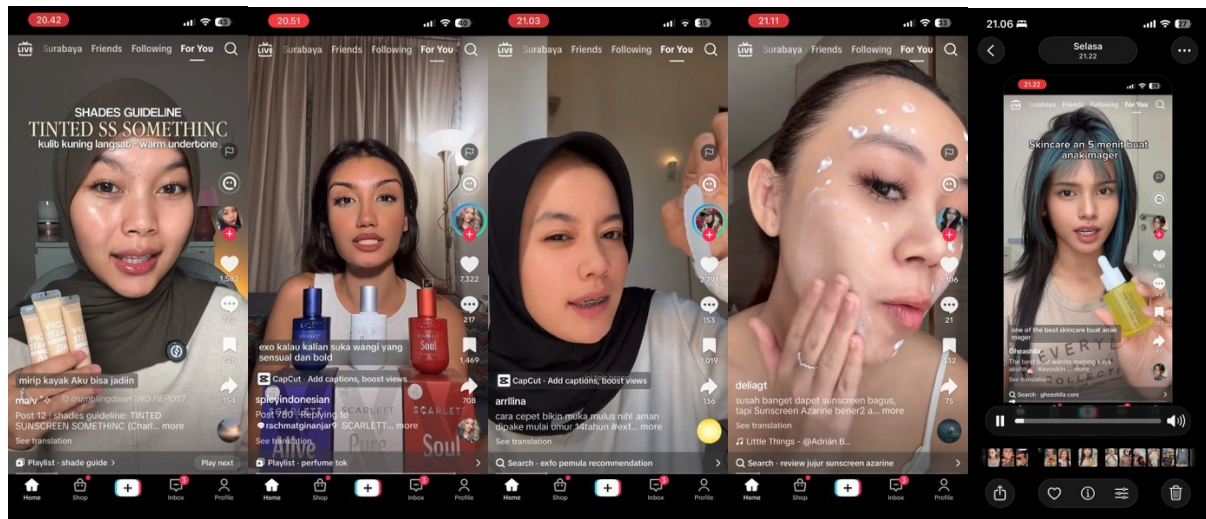


Figure 1. TikTok Affiliate Content for Beauty and Personal Care Products

Table 1. Construction of Consumption Meanings in Beauty and Personal Care Content

Brand	Key Signs	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Construction of Consumption Meaning
Somethinc	"Neutral," "Warm," "nggak bingung pilih shade"; shade and undertone comparisons	Shade selection and testing	Cosmetics need to be matched with personal characteristics	Appropriate consumers need to understand their own needs	Personalization & product knowledge
Scarlett	"Sensual," "Confident," "Clean," "Luxurious," "crowd favorite"	Fragrance characteristics and perfume-use experience	Perfume is associated with personality and self-image	Products can serve as a means of expressing identity	Identity & self-image
NPURE	Skin condition, exfoliating pad demonstration,	Product use to address skin concerns	Products are positioned as practical solutions	Skin problems are naturally addressed	Problem-solving & self-care

Brand	Key Signs	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Construction of Consumption Meaning
Azarine	usage results, checkout			through the consumption of skincare products	Value-oriented consumption
	"Nggak lengket", "hasil test in-vivo", "Twin Pack"	Comfort, product testing, and product offers	Products are constructed as comfortable, credible, and economical	Rational consumers consider benefits, evidence, and economic value	
Avoskin	"Skincare 5 menit buat anak mager," "tidak mau menyia-nyiaakan masa muda," morning routine	Skincare routine and skin care practices	Self-care is positioned as practical and future-oriented	Taking care of oneself now is an investment in one's future condition	Self-care & investasi diri

Source: Primary research data, processed by the researcher (2026).

Something constructs consumption through personalization, as shade selection is associated with understanding one's personal characteristics and product suitability. Scarlett extends the function of perfume beyond fragrance by constructing it as a marker of identity and self-image through associations between scent and characteristics such as confidence, sensuality, and luxury. NPURE establishes a problem-solution-demonstration-consumption pattern, positioning the product as both a practical solution and a form of self-care. Azarine emphasizes comfort, product testing, and economic value, directing consumption toward value-based considerations. Meanwhile, Avoskin connects skincare routines with self-care and a future-oriented perspective, framing personal care as an investment in one's future self.

In the fashion category, meaning is primarily constructed through appearance, styling, product quality, versatility, associations with public figures, and comfort.

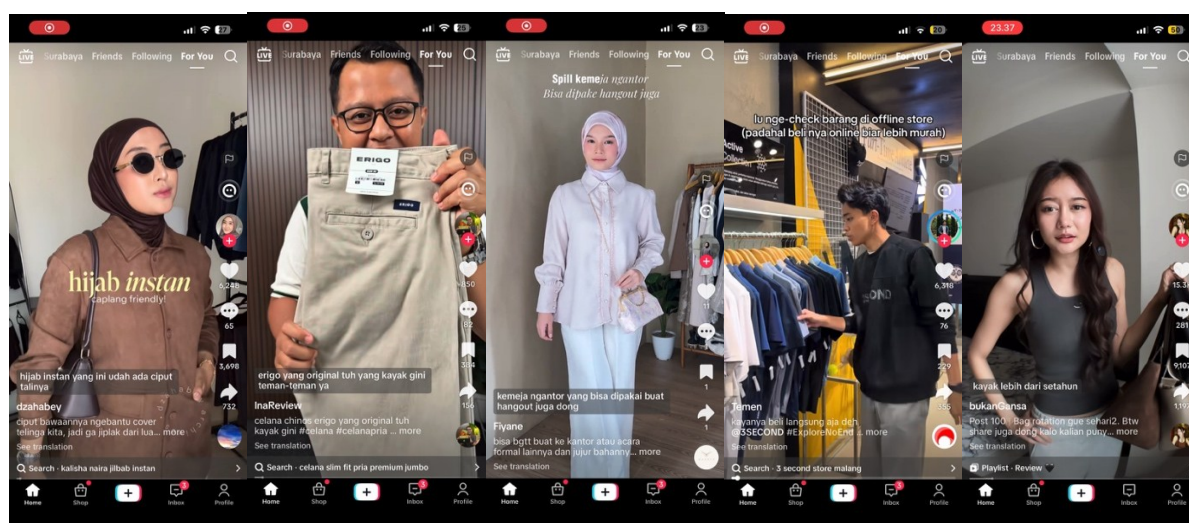


Figure 2. TikTok Affiliate Content for Local Fashion Products

Table 2. Construction of Consumption Meanings in Local Fashion Content

Brand	Key Signs	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Construction of Consumption Meaning
Khalisa Muslimah	"Modelnya simpel," "look-nya jadi mewah," "cantik banget dipakai"	A simple dress with sleeve details	Simplicity can produce an elegant appearance	An attractive appearance does not require an overly elaborate design	Estetisasi diri
Erigo	"Original", pengecekan detail produk, promo	Characteristics and authenticity of the trousers	Authentic products are associated with quality and legitimacy	Consumers need to recognize authenticity to obtain valuable products	Autentisitas & kualitas
Meccanism	"Kemeja ngantor", "buat hangout", "premium", "adem", "nggak gampang kusut", "timeless"	A shirt presented for various activities	The product is positioned as versatile, comfortable, feminine, and relevant across situations	A single product can fulfill multiple appearance-related needs	Fleksibilitas gaya hidup

Brand	Key Signs	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Construction of Consumption Meaning
3SECOND	"Jaket yang dipakai Baskara", "penasaran nyobain", "diskon", "update outfit"	The creator tries a jacket associated with a public figure	The product gains legitimacy through celebrity association and trends	Following products associated with admired public figures becomes a way of following their style	Trend-following & aspirational identity
Heylocal	"EASYDAY", "versatile", "effortless", "nyaman", "flowy"	Several outfits from a single collection	Fashion is positioned as practical, comfortable, versatile, and suitable for everyday use	Ideal fashion should be easy to combine and suitable for repeated use	Lifestyle & practicality

Source: Primary research data, processed by the researcher (2026).

Khalisa Muslimah constructs fashion as a form of self-aestheticization, while Erigo positions authenticity as a basis for product quality and legitimacy. Meccanism emphasizes the versatility of clothing for both professional and social activities. 3SECOND constructs meaning through associations with public figures and trends, whereas Heylocal connects fashion with everyday comfort and practicality. Thus, fashion consumption within the research corpus is not merely related to the need for clothing but also involves the management of appearance, authenticity, style, versatility, and comfort.

In the F&B category, consumption meanings are primarily constructed through food visuals, texture, taste, eating experiences, and claims regarding product benefits.

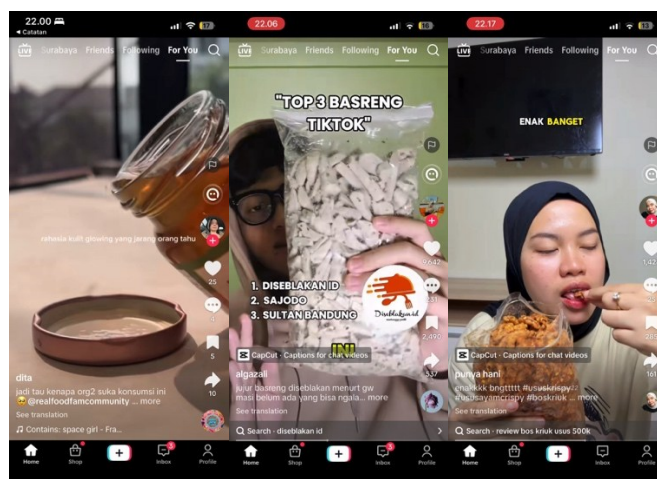


Figure 3. TikTok Affiliate Content for Local Food and Beverage Products

Table 3. Construction of Consumption Meanings in F&B Content

Brand	Key Signs	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Construction of Consumption Meaning
Realfood Bird's Nest	Vitamin A, date extract, antioxidants, visual representations of texture and packaging	A food/beverage product containing specific ingredients	The product is associated with health and nutrition	Consumption can become part of an investment in health	Wellness & functional value
Diseblakan.id	Seblak mix crackers, large portion, "pedas," mukbang, price-related questions	The creator displays and consumes the product	The food is constructed as appetizing and enticing to try	Food that is visually and sensorially appealing is worth trying	Sensory pleasure & curiosity
Bos Kriuk	"Super crispy," product pieces, biting/eating process	The creator displays and tries the product	Crispy texture becomes the central element of the eating experience	Food offering intense sensory stimulation represents a pleasure worth enjoying	Indulgence & sensory experience

Source: Primary research data, processed by the researcher (2026).

Realfood associates consumption with wellness and functional benefits through signs related to ingredients and their perceived effects on the body. Diseblakan.id relies

more heavily on visual presentation, portion size, spiciness, and eating activities to construct curiosity and sensory pleasure. Meanwhile, Bos Kriuk uses crispy texture and the act of biting as demonstrations of the consumption experience, thereby constructing meanings of indulgence and sensory experience.

In the household category, the study analyzes LEKA Dehumidifier content that represents the use of technology within the domestic environment. The signs primarily relate to room humidity, device operation, and household environmental conditions. The analysis shows that the product is positioned not only in terms of its technical function but also in relation to comfort and control over the domestic environment.

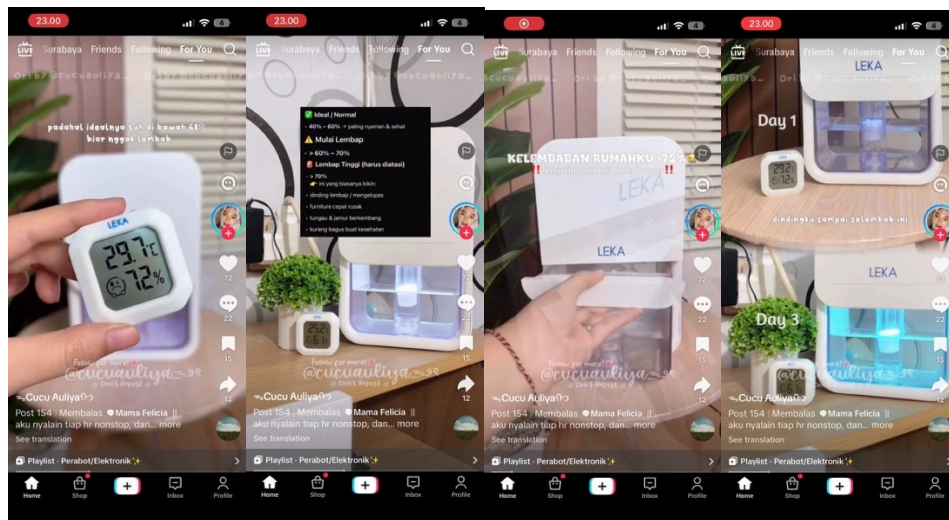


Figure 4. TikTok Affiliate Content Featuring the LEKA Dehumidifier

Table 4. Construction of Consumption Meaning in Household Content

Brand	Key Signs	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Construction of Consumption Meaning
LEKA Dehumidifier	"Kelembaban rumahku?", humidity indicator, collected water, household use	A device used to reduce room humidity	Technology becomes a means of creating a comfortable and controlled living environment	An ideal home is one whose environmental conditions can be managed through technology	Domestic comfort & environmental control

Source: Primary research data, processed by the researcher (2026).

LEKA's content connects the dehumidifier with the domestic environment through signs of humidity, device indicators, and collected water. At the connotative

level, technology is not understood merely as an electronic device but as a means of creating comfort and exercising control over the domestic environment. The resulting myth is that a comfortable home is one in which environmental conditions can be effectively managed with the assistance of technology.

In the lifestyle category, this study analyzes affiliate content featuring the Ortuseight Hyperblast 2.0, which presents the product through testing of its materials, structure, durability, and performance in use. This representation indicates that the shoes are constructed not merely as a fashion product but also as a product that supports users' activities and performance.

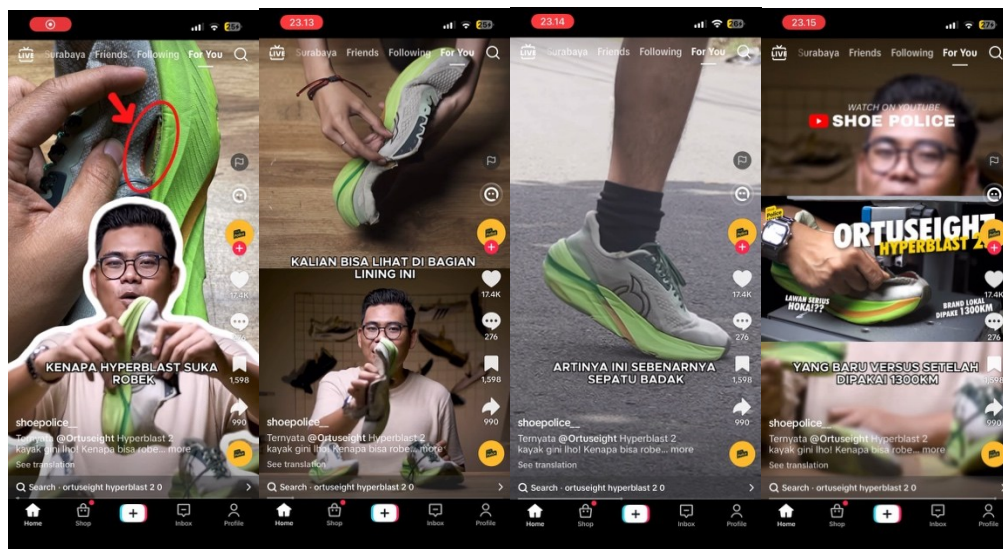


Figure 5. TikTok Affiliate Content Featuring the Ortuseight Hyperblast 2.0

Table 5. Construction of Consumption Meaning in Lifestyle Content

Brand/Product	Key Signs	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Construction of Consumption Meaning
Ortuseight Hyperblast 2.0	Close-up shots of the shoes, upper testing, material, rubber, outsole, running activity, performance assessment	The creator tests the physical condition, materials, durability, and performance of the shoes	Product quality needs to be demonstrated through testing and actual usage experience	A sports product is worth choosing when its durability and performance can meet the demands of the intended activity	Performance-oriented consumption

Source: Primary research data, processed by the researcher (2026).

Ortuseight is constructed through product testing rather than merely through appearance. Examination of the upper, materials, rubber, outsole, and use during running activities positions the creator as an evaluator who assesses and demonstrates the product's performance. At the connotative level, shoe quality is associated with durability and the ability to support physical activities. The resulting myth is that a sports product is worthy of consumption when its quality can be demonstrated through actual performance.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that TikTok Affiliate functions not only as a mechanism for promotion and transactions but also as a space for the production of consumption meanings. The 15 pieces of content analyzed show that local products are not communicated solely through their functional attributes. Through visual representations, narratives, demonstrations, creators' experiences, and usage contexts, products are positioned in particular relationships with consumers' needs and everyday lives.

These findings complement previous studies that have primarily examined TikTok Affiliate through variables such as content entertainment, product informativeness, source credibility, and purchase intention. For example, found that content entertainment, product informativeness, and source credibility positively influence purchase intention in TikTok Affiliate content [6], [18]. Other studies in Indonesia have also shown that information reliability, interaction, economic considerations, and promotional factors are associated with purchase intention among TikTok Shop users.

However, these studies primarily explain the factors that drive consumer responses, whereas the present study reveals how products are first assigned meaning before becoming objects of consumption. Accordingly, the communication process identified in this study can be understood as a process in which products are represented, interpreted, made personally relevant, and ultimately positioned for consumption.

This finding indicates that affiliate persuasion operates not only at the level of purchase intention but also at the level of meaning-making. Creators are not merely intermediaries between products and buyers; rather, they function as mediators who connect product attributes with the needs, identities, experiences, and everyday lives of their audiences.

The findings further demonstrate that the material functions of products are consistently extended into symbolic meanings. Skincare is not limited to the function of caring for the skin, perfume is not limited to providing fragrance, clothing is not limited to covering the body, food is not limited to satisfying biological needs, and sports shoes are not limited to protecting the feet.

In the analyzed content, these functions are associated with broader meanings. Skincare is constructed as self-care and self-investment; perfume as image and identity; fashion as aesthetics, authenticity, versatility, and aspiration; food as wellness and sensory experience; LEKA as domestic comfort; and Ortuseight as performance.

These findings are consistent with studies of symbolic consumption, which demonstrate that consumption objects can be used to express identity and lifestyle within social media environments. For instance, demonstrate that fashion choices, consumption locations, and visual representations on social media can form part of the performance of social identity and lifestyle [19], [20].

However, the present study introduces an important shift in focus. While studies of symbolic consumption generally ask how consumers use objects to construct their identities, this study asks how affiliate communication makes those objects available as symbols of identity, self-care, wellness, or performance.

In other words, symbolic value resides neither solely within the product nor is it created entirely by consumers. Rather, it is produced through processes of representation. This is what makes TikTok Affiliate particularly relevant as an object of communication research: what is marketed is not merely an object but also a particular way of making sense of that object.

The analysis also demonstrates that creators do not merely communicate product characteristics but implicitly construct images of the ideal consumer. On the one hand, the ideal consumer is represented as an individual who understands their own needs, as illustrated by the Somethinc content. On the other hand, consumers are positioned as individuals capable of evaluating product benefits and value, as demonstrated in the Azarine and Ortuseight content. In the fashion category, the ideal consumer is constructed as an individual capable of using products to develop a particular appearance, identity, or lifestyle.

Thus, affiliate communication does not merely answer the question, “What does the product offer?” It also implicitly addresses the question, “What kind of consumer should use this product?”

This finding can be considered alongside research on TikTok influencers showing that influencer credibility, trust, and engagement are associated with purchase intention. For example, found that influencer credibility is associated with trust and purchase intention among TikTok users in Indonesia[6], [21]. Other studies have similarly shown that influencer credibility and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) can influence purchase intention through consumer trust.

However, credibility is not the only communicative function of creators identified in the present study. Creators also function as translators of meaning. They translate technical features into experiences, problems into solutions, products into identities, and material attributes into reasons for consumption. Accordingly, the role of creators in affiliate marketing can be understood more broadly as mediators of consumption meaning rather than merely sources of credibility.

The findings become more apparent when examined through Roland Barthes’ concept of myth. At the denotative level, the videos simply display products and their use. At the connotative level, however, products acquire particular associations:

1. Skincare: self-care

2. Perfume: confidence
3. Fashion: identity
4. Food: pleasure/wellness
5. Dehumidifier: domestic comfort
6. Sports shoes: performance

When these relationships are repeatedly represented and accepted as reasonable, the relationship between needs and consumption begins to appear natural. For example, having a skin concern appears to naturally require skincare; wanting to appear confident appears to require perfume; wanting a comfortable home appears to require environmental-control technology; and seeking improved performance appears to require appropriate sports shoes.

From a Barthesian perspective, myth operates by making particular cultural constructions appear natural and taken for granted. Recent semiotic studies of digital advertising have likewise demonstrated that visual and verbal signs can develop into myths that naturalize particular consumerist values, aspirations, and lifestyles [22].

Thus, the myths in TikTok Affiliate content do not reside in the products themselves but in the relationships constructed between products and consumers' lives. Skincare does not inherently signify self-care. Perfume does not inherently signify confidence. Shoes do not inherently signify performance. These meanings appear natural because they are constructed through signs, narratives, experiences, and representations.

This is where the primary contribution of the Barthesian approach in this study lies: it deconstructs seemingly natural relationships and demonstrates that such relationships are in fact products of communicative construction.

One of the strongest findings is that persuasion in affiliate content does not always take the form of hard selling. Instead, persuasion often operates through the construction of meaning before a purchasing action takes place. In the Somethinc content, persuasion is constructed through information. In NPURE, it operates through problem identification and solution demonstration. In Scarlett and Avoskin, it is developed through personal experience. In Azarine and Ortuseight, persuasion is constructed through testing and evidence. Meanwhile, Diseblakan.id and Bos Kriuk rely on sensory stimulation, whereas 3SECOND employs aspirational associations.

This finding is related to Mulia, who demonstrated that content entertainment, product informativeness, and source credibility influence purchase intention in the context of TikTok Affiliate [6]. However, the present study extends this finding by demonstrating how these elements operate semiotically. Information is not merely information; it can construct the image of a knowledgeable consumer. Demonstration is not merely demonstration; it can establish the perception that a product constitutes a solution. Testing is not merely technical evidence; it can construct the consumer as a rational decision-maker.

Accordingly, affiliate persuasion can be understood as a process of meaning-making, identification, perceived relevance, and consumption. The strength of affiliate

marketing therefore lies not merely in its ability to communicate “buy this product” but in its ability to make consumers feel that “this product fits me, my needs, and the life I live.”

The findings demonstrate that the local products featured in the 15 analyzed pieces of content do not necessarily derive their appeal from explicit narratives of local pride. Instead, their legitimacy is constructed through quality, authenticity, comfort, identity, wellness, experience, performance, and lifestyle. This finding indicates that being a local product represents a characteristic of product origin, but does not automatically determine the consumption meaning constructed within the content.

Within the context of symbolic consumption, products can acquire social and cultural value through their associations with identity, lifestyle, and values considered important by consumers [19]. Thus, local products in social commerce can gain legitimacy not only through messages emphasizing “pride in local products” but also through their ability to fulfill functional needs while simultaneously representing consumers’ values and lifestyles.

This finding is also consistent with the perspective that consumption on social media involves not only economic exchange but can also function as a means of constructing and expressing social identity. In the present study, this pattern is evident in the construction of Somethinc through personalization, Ortuseight through performance, LEKA through domestic comfort, and Realfood through wellness. Therefore, locality represents the point of origin of the product, whereas consumption meaning is constructed through processes of representation and symbolic association.

Theoretically, this study makes three contributions. First, it extends research on TikTok Affiliate beyond its conventional focus on purchase intention toward the production of consumption meanings. Second, Barthesian semiotics demonstrates how the material functions of products can be transformed into symbolic value through processes of connotation and myth. Third, this study shows that the consumption meanings of local products are multidimensional, encompassing self-oriented values, identity, functional and value considerations, experience, and lifestyle.

Thus, TikTok Affiliate can be understood not merely as a technology that shortens the distance between promotion and transaction, but as a cultural space in which products are assigned meaning and consumption is normalized through signs.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study demonstrates that TikTok Affiliate functions not only as a medium for promotion and transactions but also as a space for the construction of consumption meanings. Through visual and verbal signs, local products are constructed as part of self-care, identity, functional value, experience, and lifestyle. These findings indicate that affiliate persuasion operates not merely through direct calls to purchase but also through the construction of meanings that make products relevant to consumers’ needs and everyday lives. **Implication:** For local brands, communication

strategies can therefore emphasize product values, experiences, identity, and benefits rather than relying solely on direct promotional messages. Thus, TikTok Affiliate should be understood not merely as a space for selling local products but also as a communicative space for shaping how consumers make sense of consumption.

Limitation: This study is limited to 15 TikTok Affiliate contents and employs a semiotic approach; therefore, it does not directly capture consumers' responses or actual purchasing behavior. **Future Research:** Future research could expand the number of analyzed contents and employ reception analysis or quantitative approaches to examine the relationships among meaning construction, creator credibility, and purchase intention.

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