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# Beyond source credibility: drivers of misinformation verification intentions on TikTok in Peru

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## Abstract

TikTok has become a major source of information, raising concerns about the rapid spread of misinformation in highly engaging and entertainment-driven environments. This study examines the factors influencing users' intention to verify information before sharing content on TikTok, with a focus on the Peruvian context. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Source Credibility Theory, and the Knowledge–Attitude–Behaviour (KAB) model, a structural model was tested using survey data from 163 active TikTok users. The results show that awareness and knowledge, perceived behavioural control, attitudes, and subjective norms significantly influence verification intentions. In contrast, perceived source credibility was not significant. These findings suggest that, in the context of TikTok, verification behaviour is driven more by individual cognitive and behavioural factors than by traditional credibility cues. This study contributes to the literature by providing evidence from an underrepresented context and highlighting the need for platform-specific approaches to misinformation. The findings also offer practical implications for digital literacy initiatives and platform-specific interventions to reduce misinformation.

**Keywords**: TikTok, Misinformation, Verification Behaviour, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Source Credibility, Digital Literacy

## Introduction

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has significantly accelerated the spread of false information. Fake news, defined as "fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent" (Lazer et al., 2018), has proliferated due to technological advancements that enable rapid and large-scale information dissemination. Empirical evidence shows that false news spreads substantially faster than truthful information; for instance, it is up to six times more likely to be shared on Twitter and 70% more likely to be retweeted (Vosoughi et al., 2018). While misinformation is not a new phenomenon, the digital ecosystem has dramatically amplified its scale and speed. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook illustrate this trend, with documented increases in the circulation of misleading content (Shu et al., 2017; Sharma, 2019).

The consequences of misinformation extend far beyond inaccurate content. Prior research has demonstrated its impact across multiple domains, including politics (Tsfati et al., 2020), financial markets (Fong, 2021), public health (Pennycook & Rand, 2019; Vosoughi et al., 2018), and nutrition (Rowe & Alexander, 2019). In more extreme cases, misinformation has contributed to social unrest and violence (Miró-Llinares & Aguerri, 2023). For example, a false report of an explosion at the White House in 2013 triggered a

temporary loss of $130 billion in stock market value (Rapoza, 2017). Similarly, misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic has been linked to harmful behaviours, including vaccine hesitancy and the adoption of ineffective treatments (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

More recently, TikTok has emerged as a critical platform in the misinformation landscape. Unlike earlier social media platforms, TikTok's algorithm prioritizes engagement and virality, thereby increasing the visibility of emotionally appealing, easily shareable content (Bautista et al., 2021). This design potentially amplifies the spread of misinformation at an unprecedented speed. Evidence supports this concern: approximately 23% of U.S. adults report frequently encountering inaccurate information on TikTok, while 49% report encountering it occasionally (Shearer, 2024). These patterns suggest that TikTok's content dynamics may fundamentally reshape how misinformation is consumed and shared.

This issue is particularly relevant in the Global South, where digital adoption is high, but media literacy may be uneven. In Peru, TikTok has achieved substantial penetration, with over 19 million users and approximately 76% of the population active on social media (Statista, 2023). Users spend an average of 52 minutes per day on these platforms (Kemp, 2024), highlighting the intensity of exposure. However, the ability to critically evaluate information remains limited. A regional study indicates that 70% of Latin Americans struggle to distinguish between fake and real news, with Peruvians among the most affected: 79% report difficulty identifying misinformation, and 47% are unfamiliar with the term "fake news" (Diazgranados, 2020).

Despite the growing relevance of TikTok, most existing research on misinformation has focused on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, leaving a gap in understanding how users engage with and respond to misinformation in short-form video environments. There is limited evidence on the factors that influence individuals' intention to verify information before sharing content on TikTok. Addressing this gap is essential for developing effective strategies to mitigate misinformation in rapidly evolving digital ecosystems (Aïmeur et al., 2023; Z. Zhang & Cheng, 2024).

## Literature review and theoretical foundation

Research on misinformation dissemination has largely focused on Western platforms and developed countries, creating significant gaps in understanding how misinformation operates in other regions. In Latin America, where digital literacy levels are comparatively lower, users face greater challenges in identifying false information. A Kaspersky report (Diazgranados, 2020) indicates that approximately 70% of Latin Americans struggle to detect misinformation, with Peru showing the highest rate at 79%. These findings suggest that contextual factors such as education, media trust, and digital literacy significantly shape how misinformation is interpreted and shared (Pickles et al., 2021; Apuke & Omar, 2021a). As a result, insights derived from developed countries may not fully apply to regions such as Peru, highlighting the need for geographically grounded research.

Beyond geographical imbalances, platform-specific dynamics also remain underexplored. While prior studies have primarily focused on Facebook and Twitter, TikTok introduces distinct mechanisms that may alter the diffusion of misinformation. Its algorithmic design, particularly the "For You Page," prioritizes highly engaging and emotionally stimulating content, increasing the likelihood that sensational or misleading information gains visibility (Chen & Shi, 2022). Unlike text-based platforms, where users may rely on collective judgment or deliberation (Pennycook & Rand, 2019), TikTok operates within an influencer-driven ecosystem in which content creators are often perceived as trusted sources (Molina et al., 2021). Additionally, the platform's emphasis on short-form, visually engaging content and entertainment-oriented consumption reduces the likelihood of critical evaluation (O'Sullivan et al., 2022; Bhargava et al., 2023; Bautista et al., 2021). Despite these characteristics, limited research has examined how TikTok's environment shapes users' responses to misinformation, particularly in non-Western contexts.

To address these gaps, this study adopts an integrated theoretical approach combining the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Source Credibility Theory, and the Knowledge–Attitude–Behaviour (KAB) model. TPB provides a robust framework for explaining behavioural intentions in terms of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Apuke & Omar, 2021b). In the context of TikTok, these dimensions are particularly relevant, as social influence and perceived ease of action may shape users' decisions to verify or share content.

Complementing TPB, Source Credibility Theory explains how trust in information sources influences user behaviour. Prior studies demonstrate that perceived credibility plays a central role in determining whether individuals accept or share information (Koohikamali & Sidorova, 2017; Shin, 2022; Bhagat & Kim, 2023). On TikTok, however, credibility assessments may be shaped less by traditional authority and more by perceived relatability and influencer trust (Duffy et al., 2020; Humprecht, 2019; Majerczak & Strzelecki, 2022). This shift raises questions about whether credibility operates differently in entertainment-driven environments.

Finally, the Knowledge–Attitude–Behaviour (KAB) model introduces a cognitive dimension by linking awareness and knowledge of misinformation to attitudes and behavioural responses. In contexts with limited digital literacy, knowledge becomes a critical factor influencing users' ability to evaluate and respond to content (Morrow et al., 2022). Integrating KAB with TPB provides a more comprehensive understanding of how cognitive and behavioural factors jointly shape verification intentions.

Building on these perspectives, this study addresses three key gaps in the literature. First, it contributes to the limited body of research on misinformation in Latin America, particularly in Peru, where users are highly vulnerable to misinformation (Apuke & Omar, 2021a; Diazgranados, 2020). Second, it advances platform-specific research by examining TikTok's algorithmic and influencer-driven dynamics, which differ substantially from traditional social media platforms (Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022; O'Sullivan et al., 2022). Third, it develops a theoretically integrated framework combining TPB, Source Credibility Theory, and KAB to explain users' intention to verify information before sharing content. This approach offers a more holistic understanding of misinformation behaviour in emerging digital environments.

## Theoretical framework

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Source Credibility Theory, and the Knowledge–Attitude–Behaviour (KAB) model to explain users' intention to verify information before sharing content on TikTok.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides the core behavioural structure of the model. It posits that behavioural intention is determined by attitudes (AT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC) (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitudes reflect individuals' evaluations of the need to verify information, subjective norms capture perceived social pressure to do so, and perceived behavioural control represents individuals' confidence in their ability to verify content (Ajzen, 1991; Conner & Sparks, 2005). TPB has been widely validated across domains such as health behaviour, environmental actions, and digital decision-making (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Godin et al., 1996; Liobikiene et al., 2016; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). Recent studies confirm its relevance in social media contexts, particularly in explaining information-sharing and verification behaviour (Wang et al., 2023; Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020).

To complement this behavioural perspective, Source Credibility Theory explains how perceptions of trustworthiness and expertise influence users' responses to information (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990; Umeogu, 2012). Individuals are more likely to accept and share information from sources they perceive as credible (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). In digital environments, credibility is often inferred from cues such as user profiles, engagement metrics, and influencer status (Westerman et al., 2014). On social media platforms, particularly those driven by influencers, perceived credibility plays a central role

in shaping attitudes and behaviours (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Vosoughi et al., 2018). However, in entertainment-oriented environments such as TikTok, credibility may be influenced more by relatability than by traditional authority.

Finally, the Knowledge–Attitude–Behaviour (KAB) model introduces a cognitive dimension by linking awareness and knowledge to attitudes and behavioural outcomes (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; Maiman & Becker, 2014). According to this model, individuals with greater knowledge of misinformation are more likely to develop critical attitudes and engage in verification behaviours (Hines et al., 1987). Prior research confirms that awareness plays a key role in reducing the sharing of misinformation on digital platforms (Vraga & Bode, 2017; X. Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020; Tandoc et al., 2018). In fast-paced environments such as TikTok, where content is consumed rapidly and often without reflection, knowledge becomes a critical factor in enabling users to identify misleading information (Tambe & Hussein, 2023; Bovet & Makse, 2019; Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

By integrating these three perspectives, the proposed framework captures behavioural, social, and cognitive drivers of misinformation verification. TPB explains intention formation, Source Credibility Theory accounts for trust-based evaluations, and KAB incorporates the role of knowledge and awareness. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive basis for analysing how users respond to misinformation in TikTok's unique digital environment.

**Research Model and Hypotheses**

Awareness and knowledge (AK) of misinformation refer to individuals' ability to recognize and understand the nature of false information encountered online (De Paor & Heravi, 2020; Koltay, 2011). In fast-paced environments such as TikTok, where users are exposed to large volumes of content, this awareness becomes critical for enabling informed evaluation. Prior research suggests that users with higher levels of knowledge are more likely to engage in verification behaviours, as they possess the cognitive tools necessary to assess content credibility (Tambe & Hussein, 2023).

Within the KAB framework, knowledge is expected to shape both attitudes and behavioural control. Greater awareness of misinformation can foster more critical attitudes toward content verification and enhance users' confidence in their ability to verify information.

*H1: Awareness and knowledge positively influence attitudes toward verification.*

*H2: Awareness and knowledge positively influence perceived behavioural control.*

Attitude Toward Behaviour (AT) reflects individuals' evaluation of whether to verify information before sharing content. In social media contexts, positive attitudes toward verification are associated with more responsible information-sharing practices (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). On TikTok, where content is often shared for entertainment and social engagement, users may weigh the benefits of verification against the social rewards of rapid sharing. Empirical evidence indicates that favorable attitudes increase the likelihood of engaging in verification behaviours, even in high-speed digital environments (Yu et al., 2024).

*H3: Attitude toward verification positively influences the intention to verify content before sharing on TikTok.*

Subjective norms (SN) capture perceived social pressure to engage in a given behaviour. In social media environments, user behaviour is strongly influenced by peers and online communities (Barbera & Ajzen, 2020; Al-Debei et al., 2015). On TikTok, where trends and social validation are central, users may be more likely to verify information if such behaviour is encouraged or expected within their social networks. Prior research supports the role of social influence in shaping content-sharing decisions (Hsu et al., 2021).

*H4: Subjective norms positively influence intention to verify before sharing content on TikTok.*

Perceived behavioural control (PBC) reflects individuals' confidence in their ability to perform a behaviour. In the context of misinformation, this refers to users' perceived capability to assess and verify information before sharing (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1977). Given TikTok's rapid content flow, users may feel

constrained in their ability to verify information. However, those with higher perceived control are more likely to engage in verification behaviours (Zhang & Cheng, 2024).

*H5: Perceived behavioural control positively influences intention to verify before sharing content on TikTok.*

Perceived source credibility (SOURCE) refers to the extent to which users consider a source to be trustworthy and knowledgeable (Ohanian, 1990). In digital environments, credibility influences how users evaluate and respond to information (Saini & Bansal, 2023; Rieh & Danielson, 2007; Sbaffi & Rowley, 2017). On social media platforms, credibility cues such as expertise and trustworthiness often shape information adoption (Ismagilova et al., 2020; McGinnies & Ward, 1980). In TikTok's influencer-driven ecosystem, perceived credibility may play a key role in determining whether users engage in verification behaviour.

*H6: Perceived source credibility positively influences intention to verify before sharing content on TikTok.*

Figure 1 below presents the proposed model, which integrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with the Perceived Source Credibility Model and the Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour Theory to analyze the intention to verify misinformation before sharing it on TikTok.

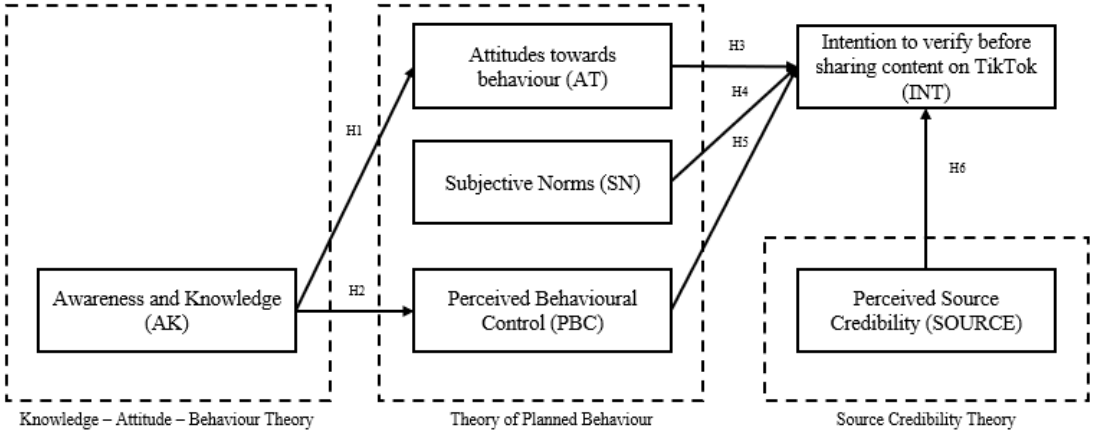



**Figure 1: Research Model**

## Research Methodology

### Measurement Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to assess the variables related to the intention to verify information before sharing content on TikTok. Measurement items were adapted from established literature to ensure validity and reliability. Awareness and knowledge of fake news were measured using items from Bawden (2001), Koltay (2011), and McDougall (2019), while intention to verify information was measured based on Ajzen (1991) and Sui and Zhang (2021b).

All items were contextualized to the TikTok environment to reflect users' experiences on the platform. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

### Data Collection

The target population consisted of active TikTok users in Peru aged 18-35. This age group represents a highly active segment of TikTok users in urban Perú, although the sample was not designed to be nationally representative (Statista, 2023). The survey was administered in Spanish and distributed through social

media using a snowball sampling technique (Babbie, 2020). Participation was voluntary and anonymous to encourage honest responses.

**Data Analysis**
Data were analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS. This technique is appropriate for examining relationships among latent variables and testing theoretical models in behavioural research (Hair et al., 2017; Kline, 2015). SEM enables the simultaneous estimation of multiple relationships, making it well-suited to evaluating the proposed model.

**Sample**
A total of 230 responses were collected, of which 163 were valid and used for analysis. This sample size meets the recommended statistical power thresholds for SEM analysis (Cohen, 1992; Hair et al., 2010).
The sample consisted primarily of undergraduate students (60.74%), with most respondents residing in Lima (93.87%). The majority were between 18 and 25 years old (92.02%), and 63.8% of participants were female. These demographic characteristics reflect the profile of TikTok's most active urban user segment in Peru, but do not constitute a nationally representative sample. Findings should therefore be interpreted as evidence about young, educated, urban TikTok users rather than all Peruvian TikTok users.

## Results

**Measurement Model**
The measurement model was assessed in terms of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Item reliability was evaluated through factor loadings, with values above the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Barclay et al., 1995). Items with low loadings were removed, including SN2, AK1, AK4, AK5, AT1, PB3, and INT3. The remaining items met the required threshold. It should be noted that the removal of SN2 resulted in Subjective Norms (SN) being retained as a single-item construct. In PLS-SEM, single-item constructs are treated as having a reliability of 1.0 by convention, which explains the diagonal value of 1.00 for SN in Table 2 (Fornell-Larcker criterion) and its absence from Table 1. While single-item measures are acceptable in PLS-SEM for concrete (Hair et al., 2017), this represents a limitation that may affect the validity of SN measurement, and future studies should develop multi-item scales for this construct in the TikTok context.
Internal consistency was confirmed through composite reliability (CR), with values ranging from 0.813 to 0.888, exceeding the minimum acceptable level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Convergent validity was established as all average variance extracted (AVE) values were above 0.5 (Hu et al., 2004), as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Reliability and Convergent Validity**

| Construct | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|
| Awareness and Knowledge (AK) | 0.836 | 0.719 |
| Attitudes towards behaviour (AT) | 0.813 | 0.686 |
| Intention to verify before sharing (INT) | 0.879 | 0.785 |
| Perceived Behaviour Control (PBC) | 0.838 | 0.721 |
| Perceived Source Credibility (SOURCE) | 0.888 | 0.729 |

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). The square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs,

supporting discriminant validity (Chin, 1998). Additionally, all HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Kline, 2015), further confirming discriminant validity (see Tables 2 and 3). Overall, the measurement model demonstrates adequate reliability and validity.

**Table 2. Correlation Among Variables**

| Construct | AK | AT | INT | PBC | SN | SOURCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Awareness and Knowledge (AK) | 0.848 | | | | | |
| Attitudes towards behaviour (AT) | 0.306 | 0.828 | | | | |
| Intention to verify before sharing (INT) | 0.151 | 0.421 | 0.886 | | | |
| Perceived Behaviour Control (PBC) | 0.163 | 0.282 | 0.496 | 0.849 | | |
| Subjective Norms (SN) | -0.034 | 0.127 | 0.251 | 0.120 | 1.00 | |
| Perceived Source Credibility(SOURCE) | 0.035 | 0.019 | 0.099 | 0.157 | 0.016 | 0.854 |

**Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)**

| Construct | AK | AT | INT | PBC | SN | SOURCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Awareness and Knowledge (AK) | - | | | | | |
| Attitudes towards behaviour (AT) | 0.520 | - | | | | |
| Intention to verify before sharing (INT) | 0.231 | 0.672 | - | | | |
| Perceived Behaviour Control (PBC) | 0.271 | 0.484 | 0.726 | - | | |
| Subjective Norms (SN) | 0.059 | 0.165 | 0.292 | 0.171 | - | |
| Perceived Source Credibility (SOURCE) | 0.085 | 0.121 | 0.077 | 0.176 | 0.081 | - |

**Structural Model**

To assess the explanatory power of the proposed structural model, this study examined the R2 values of the dependent variable and the paths between variables. The structural model was evaluated using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples (Hair et al., 2017). The model explains 37.7% of the variance in intention to verify information before sharing content on TikTok ($R^2 = 0.377$).

Results indicate that awareness and knowledge positively influence both attitudes (H1: $\beta = 0.306$, $p < 0.05$) and perceived behavioural control (H2: $\beta = 0.163$, $p < 0.10$, marginally significant). In turn, intention to verify is significantly influenced by attitude (H3: $\beta = 0.284$, $p < 0.05$), subjective norms (H4: $\beta = 0.161$, $p < 0.05$), and perceived behavioural control (H5: $\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.05$).

However, perceived source credibility does not significantly affect intention (H6 not supported). It should also be noted that H2 was supported only at a marginal significance level ($p < 0.10$), a weaker threshold than the conventional $p < 0.05$ criterion applied to all other supported hypotheses. This result should therefore be interpreted with caution and warrants replication with larger and more diverse samples before firm conclusions can be drawn.

## Discussion and Implications

This study examined the factors influencing users' intention to verify information before sharing content on TikTok in the Peruvian context. The findings provide strong support for the proposed model, with awareness and knowledge, perceived behavioural control, attitudes, and subjective norms significantly influencing verification intentions. However, contrary to expectations, perceived source credibility was not significant.

The results highlight the central role of individual-level factors in shaping verification behaviour. Awareness and knowledge not only enhance users' attitudes toward verification but also strengthen their perceived ability to verify information. This finding reinforces prior research emphasizing the importance of media literacy in promoting critical engagement with online content (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Pennycook & Rand, 2019). In fast-paced environments such as TikTok, where content is consumed rapidly, these cognitive resources become essential for enabling users to question and evaluate information.

Additionally, the significant effects of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control underscore the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in digital environments. Users are more likely to verify information when they hold positive attitudes toward verification, perceive social support for such behaviour, and feel capable of doing so. These findings align with prior studies on social media behaviour, which highlight the influence of social context and perceived self-efficacy on information-sharing decisions (Ajzen, 1991; Kim et al., 2021; Hsu et al., 2021).

One of the most notable findings of this study is the lack of significance of source credibility. This result diverges from existing literature that identifies credibility as a key driver of information-related behaviour (Majerczak & Strzelecki, 2022). In the Peruvian context, where a large proportion of users struggle to distinguish between real and false information (Diazgranados, 2020), general skepticism toward digital content may reduce the influence of credibility cues. Furthermore, TikTok's entertainment-driven, influencer-based environment may shift users' reliance away from traditional markers of credibility toward more subjective or affective evaluations of content (Ruiz-Dodobara et al., 2024). This suggests that credibility may function differently across platforms and contexts, highlighting the need for platform-specific theoretical approaches. Several complementary explanations merit consideration. First, TikTok's algorithmic design prioritizes emotional engagement and virality over source authority (Chen & Shi, 2022), meaning that users are exposed to content through the "For You Page" regardless of source characteristics. In this context, source credibility cues may simply be less salient or less accessible than on text-based platforms where source identity is more prominently displayed. Second, the measurement scale employed for source credibility (adapted from Ohanian, 1990) was originally developed to assess celebrity endorsers and may not fully capture the multidimensional nature of credibility in influencer-driven, short-form video environments, where relatability, authenticity, and entertainment value play a larger role than expertise or trustworthiness in the traditional sense. Third, it is possible that, in a context characterized by widespread skepticism toward all digital content (Diazgranados, 2020), users apply a generalized distrust that does not discriminate between credible and non-credible sources, thereby suppressing source credibility's predictive power. Together, these factors suggest that the non-significance of H6 is not a methodological artefact but a substantively meaningful finding that advances our understanding of credibility as a context-dependent construct.

### Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature in three main ways. First, it addresses a geographical gap by providing empirical evidence from Peru, a context that remains underrepresented in misinformation research (Pickles et al., 2021). Second, it advances platform-specific research by examining TikTok, whose algorithmic and entertainment-driven dynamics differ substantially from traditional social media platforms. Third, it develops and tests an integrated framework combining the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Source Credibility Theory, and the Knowledge–Attitude–Behaviour model. This integration offers a more

comprehensive understanding of misinformation behaviour by accounting for cognitive, social, and behavioural factors simultaneously.

Importantly, the finding that source credibility is not a significant predictor challenges dominant assumptions in the literature. It suggests that credibility may not be a universal predictor of information-related behaviour and that its role may depend on platform characteristics and user context. This opens new avenues for research on how credibility operates in high-engagement, entertainment-oriented environments.

The results also offer differentiated contributions to each theoretical framework employed. From the perspective of the TPB, the significant effects of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control confirm that the model's explanatory power extends to verification behaviour in non-Western, fast-paced digital environments, broadening its cross-cultural applicability. From the perspective of Source Credibility Theory, the non-significance of H6 suggests that the theory operates conditionally: its predictions may hold in traditional media or text-based social platforms but require revision for entertainment-oriented, algorithmically curated environments such as TikTok. Future research should consider developing platform-specific operationalizations of credibility that incorporate relatability, authenticity, and parasocial interaction as dimensions of credibility. From the perspective of the KAB model, the significant influence of awareness and knowledge on both attitudes (H1) and perceived behavioural control (H2, marginally) reinforces the centrality of digital literacy as a cognitive antecedent to responsible information behaviour. Taken together, the integrated framework demonstrates that no single theory is sufficient to capture the full complexity of misinformation behaviour on TikTok, and that multi-theory approaches are essential for advancing this research agenda.

**Practical Implications**

The findings offer several practical insights for policymakers, educators, and platform designers. First, the strong influence of awareness and knowledge highlights the importance of digital literacy initiatives. Educational programs aimed at improving users' ability to identify misinformation can enhance both their critical attitudes and their confidence in verifying content. This is particularly relevant in contexts such as Peru, where digital skepticism coexists with limited media literacy (Diazgranados, 2020).

Second, the lack of significance of source credibility suggests that interventions focused solely on improving source reliability may be insufficient. Instead, platform-based solutions that encourage verification behaviour may be more effective. For example, TikTok could incorporate prompts or friction mechanisms that encourage users to reflect before sharing content. Such friction-based nudges have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the spread of misinformation without substantially degrading the user experience (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). In the Peruvian context specifically, where regulatory frameworks governing digital platforms are still nascent, these recommendations carry particular urgency. At the policy level, the Peruvian Ministry of Education (MINEDU) could integrate dedicated misinformation awareness modules into national secondary and university curricula, drawing on the finding that awareness and knowledge are the strongest upstream predictors of verification intentions. Civil society organizations and fact-checking initiatives — such as those modelled on regional counterparts in Brazil and Uruguay — could extend their reach by partnering with TikTok creators to embed verification prompts within popular content formats. These approaches are likely to be effective not only in Peru but in other Latin American countries sharing similar profiles of high social media penetration and limited media literacy infrastructure (Diazgranados, 2020).

Finally, given the strong role of social influence, collaboration with influencers represents a promising strategy. Influencers can be leveraged to promote verification behaviours and disseminate accurate information, particularly among younger audiences who rely heavily on social media for information consumption. Concretely, content creators with large followings in Peru could be recruited as "verification ambassadors," producing short-form content that models critical thinking practices and normalizes fact-checking behaviours within the platform's cultural norms. This approach leverages the very mechanisms—social norms and perceived behavioural control—that this study identifies as the strongest direct predictors

of verification intention. TikTok itself could incentivize such partnerships through creator programs that reward verifiably responsible information sharing. Taken together, these recommendations suggest that the most effective strategies for reducing misinformation on TikTok in Peru and similar contexts will combine individual-level cognitive empowerment (through digital literacy programs) with platform-level structural interventions (through friction and labelling mechanisms) and social-level normative influence (through influencer engagement).

## Conclusions

This study examined the factors influencing Peruvian TikTok users' intentions to verify information before sharing content. The findings demonstrate that awareness and knowledge, perceived behavioural control, and attitudes are the primary drivers of verification behaviour in this context. These results highlight the central role of individual cognitive and behavioural factors in shaping how users engage with misinformation on fast-paced, entertainment-oriented platforms.

Notably, the study found that perceived source credibility does not significantly influence verification intentions. This challenges dominant assumptions in the literature, where credibility is often considered a key determinant of information-related behaviour. On TikTok, users appear to rely less on traditional credibility cues and more on their own judgment and capabilities. This suggests that verification behaviour in high-engagement platforms may be driven more by individual-level factors than by source-based evaluations.

By integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Source Credibility Theory, and the Knowledge–Attitude–Behaviour(KAB) model, this research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding misinformation-related behaviour in social media environments. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature emphasizing the need for platform-specific approaches to studying digital behaviour, particularly in emerging contexts such as Peru.

This study is subject to certain limitations. First, the sample size of 163 respondents, while meeting minimum thresholds for PLS-SEM, may limit statistical power and the precision of effect size estimates. Second, the sample is geographically concentrated in Lima (93.87%), with a strong age homogeneity (92.02% aged 18-25) and educational bias (60.74% undergraduate students). These characteristics limit the generalizability of findings to other demographic segments of Peruvian TikTok users, particularly older adults, users in rural or peri-urban areas, and individuals with lower educational attainment. Future research should employ stratified sampling strategies to ensure broader demographic coverage across Peru's diverse regions. Third, the study's reliance on self-reported behavioural intentions introduces the potential for social desirability bias: participants may have reported stronger verification intentions than they would enact in practice, inflating effect sizes. Mixed-methods designs that combine survey data with observational or platform-level behavioural data would help address this limitation. Fourth, H2 (awareness and knowledge $\rightarrow$ perceived behavioural control) was supported only at a marginal significance level ($p < 0.10$), and this relationship warrants replication in future studies before being treated as robust. Fifth, the scale used to measure source credibility was adapted from a celebrity endorsement context (Ohanian, 1990) and may not fully capture credibility dynamics specific to TikTok's influencer ecosystem; future work should develop and validate platform-specific credibility scales. Finally, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference; experimental or longitudinal designs are needed to establish the temporal ordering of the constructs identified in the proposed model.

## Use of Generative AI and Language Tools

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Claude in limited ways during the research process: to explore literature and identify theoretical frameworks, to develop initial outlines for the Literature Review and Discussion sections, and to suggest stylistic improvements to selected paragraphs. Grammarly was used for grammar and spelling checking. All study design, data collection, statistical analysis (SmartPLS), interpretation, and final writing were performed exclusively by the authors, who critically reviewed all AI suggestions and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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