

## Ming Chuan University International College



### International Business and Trade Program Senior Thesis Handbook, 2026-2027 (Updated: March 2026)

#### IBT Senior Thesis Guidelines

To fulfill the 'professional competence' graduation requirement from the International Business and Trade Program, students must complete a senior thesis.

**Requirements:** The thesis is a team project, with 2-4 students per team. (NSTC Student Grant recipients may choose to work individually.) The thesis must pose an original research question related to international business, trade, finance, marketing, or a related field, and use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data to answer the question.

#### Steps:

1. Prepare an extended abstract to show to potential advisors. (See sample in Appendix A.) Advisors may supervise no more than six thesis projects per year. **Do NOT approach potential advisors before Week 4 of the spring semester of your junior year.**
2. Once you have found an advisor, have the advisor sign the Advisor Consent Form and submit that form to the IBT office. Also fill out and submit the accompanying e-form. **Both forms are due by the end of Week 16.**
3. Work with your advisor over the summer and during the fall and spring of your senior year. Follow all guidelines, schedules and additional instructions from your advisor.
4. Grading: Midterm = 10%; Daily Grade = 50%; Final = 40%. **Fall semester:** Your final grade will be based on your full thesis proposal. Teams will present their proposals before a committee consisting of your advisor and one external faculty reviewer. (NSTC Student Grant recipients whose proposals successfully passed the NSTC review process in the preceding semester will be graded by their advisor and do not need to present a second time.) **Spring semester:** Your final grade will be based on your completed thesis. Students who present their thesis results at the IC Conference will be graded by their advisor. All other students will present before a committee consisting of your advisor and one external faculty reviewer.
5. Provide digital and/or paper copies of the finalized thesis to the advisor and committee members, and a printed copy to the IBT office.

### Senior Thesis Timetable

SEMESTER	WEEK	TASK	CHECKED BY
Spring 2026	16	Submit “Advisor Consent Form”, signed by advisor. Separately, submit completed e-form.	Nicky
Fall 2026	1	Submit finalized extended abstract and outline of chapters to your advisor.	Advisor
	9	Submit draft of full proposal (for research papers: Microsoft Word file; thesis chapters 1-3: Introduction, Literature Review, Method).	Advisor
	~16	Oral proposal deadline (exact dates TBA).	Committee
Spring 2027	9	Submit draft of final thesis to advisor. Advisor will inform you of deadlines for remaining steps.	Advisor
	TBA*	Final draft to committee (Microsoft Word file; paper if requested).	Committee
	TBA	Submission of oral defense application form	Nicky
	TBA	Oral defense deadline	Committee
	TBA	Submit final printed copy to IC office.	Nicky

\*TBA: To be announced.

### Research Thesis Format:

1. The length of the main body of the manuscript should be 10-15 pages for the proposal (fall semester) and 20-30 pages for the thesis (spring semester).
2. The title page and table of contents should use the formats shown in Appendices B and C.
3. Tables and Figures should be placed in their most natural location within your text.
4. Font: Times New Roman, size 12. Spacing: 1.15. Margins: 2.5cm top and bottom; 3cm left, 2.5cm right.
5. All additional formatting should follow APA guidelines, unless otherwise directed by your advisor.
6. Final decisions about formatting and length are to be decided in consultation with the thesis advisor.

### Suggested Grading Rubric

Sections & Suggested Criteria	Grade
<p><b>Introduction:</b> Clear introduction to an important issue or problem; the research ‘gap’ is clearly stated; the proposed approach to filling this gap shows original and innovative thinking; research questions are provided.</p>	
<p><b>Literature Review:</b> Shows a clear command and deep understanding of the relevant literature. Theories and findings related to the research question are discussed clearly and logically. Critical theoretical or methodological gaps in the literature are highlighted. Hypotheses (if any) are stated in a way that allows them to be tested.</p>	
<p><b>Method:</b> Research design shown (in diagram if possible). Participants and sample size, materials and procedures described in clear detail. Discussion of reliability and validity checks for study variables is included. Timeline for data collection is provided. Includes discussion of research ethics and informed consent (if applicable). (For proposal, the method and timeline are feasible, realistic and can provide answers to the research questions.)</p>	
<p><b>Expected Results (Proposal Only – Fall Semester):</b> Brief explanation of anticipated findings based on theory, prior research and from any pilot data; discussion of potential implications for business practice and theory; and acknowledgment of study limitations and scope.</p> <p><b>Results (Final Thesis Only – Spring Semester):</b> Results are presented in a way that is meaningful and easy to understand for committee members with diverse areas of expertise. The analyses (statistical or qualitative) are appropriate given the nature of the data and the research questions asked. Presentation should highlight the key results. Supporting details and results from supporting analyses (for example, tests of statistical assumptions) should be available but should not be presented in a way that obscures the key findings by taking up too much time.</p>	
<p><b>Discussion/Conclusion (Final Thesis Only – Spring Semester):</b> Summary of study and key results. Discussion of how the key findings fit with previous research. Statement of the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research. Conclusion states the significance and contribution of the study.</p>	
<p><b>General: All sections are completed with sufficient detail.</b> English is clear and professional. Standard APA formatting used throughout. Oral presentation was clear and lively, with good use of visual aids; well organized and timed.</p>	
<b>OVERALL GRADE</b>	<b>/100</b>

## **Appendix A Sample Extended Abstract**

### **The Influence of Social Media Influencer Credibility on Gen Z Purchase Intention in Taiwan's Skincare Market**

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#### **Introduction**

Taiwan's skincare market has grown rapidly in recent years, driven largely by social media marketing targeted at Generation Z consumers (born 1997–2012). Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become primary channels through which young consumers discover and evaluate skincare products, with social media influencers playing an increasingly central role in shaping brand perceptions and purchase decisions. However, the proliferation of paid endorsements and sponsored content has raised questions about whether consumers perceive influencer recommendations as trustworthy. Prior research has examined influencer marketing effectiveness in Western contexts, but relatively few studies have investigated how influencer credibility dimensions—specifically expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness—affect Gen Z purchase intention in East Asian skincare markets. Furthermore, existing studies have not adequately addressed whether perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and consumer purchase intention in Taiwan. This gap is significant because Taiwan's beauty market blends local, Japanese, Korean, and Western brands, creating a uniquely competitive landscape where influencer credibility may operate differently than in single-market contexts. This study investigates: (1) How do the dimensions of influencer credibility affect Gen Z purchase intention for skincare products in Taiwan? (2) Does perceived authenticity mediate this relationship?

#### **Methodology**

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The target population is Gen Z consumers (ages 18–27) in Taiwan who have purchased skincare products within the past six months and who follow at least one skincare influencer on social media. Participants will be recruited through convenience sampling via online survey distribution on university campuses and social media groups, with a target sample size of  $N = 300$  to ensure adequate statistical power for structural equation modeling. The survey instrument adapts established scales: influencer credibility (expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness) from Ohanian's Source Credibility Scale; perceived authenticity from Napoli et al.'s brand authenticity scale, modified for influencer contexts; and purchase intention from Dodds et al.'s behavioral intention scale. All items use a 7-point Likert scale. The questionnaire will be administered in Mandarin Chinese with back-translation verification. A pilot study with 30 respondents will be conducted to assess reliability and refine item wording. Data will be analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0 to test the hypothesized direct and mediating relationships among variables.

#### **Expected Results**

Based on the source credibility model and prior empirical findings, we anticipate that all three dimensions of influencer credibility will positively influence Gen Z purchase intention, with trustworthiness exhibiting the strongest direct effect. We further expect that perceived authenticity will serve as a significant partial mediator in the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention, suggesting that credibility alone is insufficient; consumers must also

perceive the influencer's recommendations as genuine and unscripted. Specifically, we hypothesize that influencers perceived as highly expert but low in authenticity will have a weaker effect on purchase intention than those rated high on both dimensions. Additionally, we expect attractiveness to have a comparatively weaker direct effect on purchase intention in the skincare category than in fashion or lifestyle categories, given that skincare consumers may prioritize demonstrated product knowledge over visual appeal. Preliminary pilot data from 30 respondents suggest strong internal consistency across all scales (Cronbach's  $\alpha > .85$ ) and initial support for the hypothesized positive relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention.

## **Discussion**

This study contributes to the influencer marketing literature by extending the source credibility model to an underexplored East Asian skincare context and by introducing perceived authenticity as a mediating mechanism. The findings are expected to offer both theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, the study advances understanding of how credibility functions in markets where consumers are exposed to cross-cultural brand messaging and multiple competing influencer endorsements. Practically, results will help skincare brands and marketing managers in Taiwan develop more effective influencer partnership strategies by identifying which credibility dimensions matter most to Gen Z consumers. Limitations of the study include its reliance on convenience sampling, which may limit generalizability, the cross-sectional design which cannot establish causality, and the focus on self-reported purchase intention rather than actual purchasing behavior. Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to examine causal relationships and extend the model to other product categories or age cohorts.

**Keywords:** *social media influencers, Gen Z, purchase intention, source credibility, skincare, Taiwan*

**Ming Chuan University**  
**International College**  
**International Business and Trade Program**



**The Ethics of Marketing**

**Names: James Smith**

**Jennifer Bush**

**Advisor: Dr. Emily Chou**

**Date: May 22, 2027**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of  
Science in International Business and Trade**

**Appendix C Format for Research Proposal Table of Contents (Fall Semester)**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>EXTENDED ABSTRACT</b>		<b>i</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>		<b>ii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	Research Motivation: Background and Problem	
	Research Questions	
	Significance and Expected Contribution	
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>3</b>
	Literature Review	
	Hypotheses (if applicable)	
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>METHOD</b>	<b>8</b>
	Participants, Materials, Data Collection Procedures	
	Analysis	
	Procedures	
	Potential sources of bias	
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>GUIDANCE NEEDED FROM ADVISOR</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>16</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>		<b>20</b>

\*Insert your own page numbers for all sections of your thesis.

**Appendix D Format for Final Thesis Table of Contents (Spring Semester)**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS\***

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (OPTIONAL)</b>	<b>i</b>	
<b>EXTENDED ABSTRACT</b>	<b>ii</b>	
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	Research Motivation: Background and Problem	
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<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>3</b>
	Literature Review	
	Hypotheses (if applicable)	
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>METHOD</b>	<b>8</b>
	Participants, Materials, Data Collection Procedures	
	Analysis	
	Procedures	
	Potential sources of bias	
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>20</b>
	Summary of the results	
	Relationship of results to previous research	
	Theoretical and practical implications	
	Limitations of the study	
	Suggestions for future research	
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>25</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>		<b>30</b>

\*Insert your own page numbers for all sections of your thesis.