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The Impact of Formulation Mismatch on Repurchase Intention of Chinese Skincare Products: A Study Among Indonesian Students in China

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh ketidaksesuaian formulasi produk terhadap minat pembelian ulang produk perawatan kulit asal Tiongkok pada konsumen Indonesia. Seiring dengan meluasnya pemasaran merek perawatan kulit Tiongkok di Indonesia muncul keluhan mengenai kecocokan produk seperti efek whitecast atau lapisan putih pada kulit tekstur berat dan iritasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan konsep kesesuaian produk dan konsumen dengan mengkaji tiga aspek yaitu ketidaksesuaian warna kulit (skin tone mismatch) ketidaksesuaian iklim (climate mismatch) dan ketidaksesuaian jenis kulit (skin type mismatch). Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring terhadap 68 mahasiswa Indonesia yang sedang menempuh pendidikan di Tiongkok. Sampel dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling dan snowball sampling. Analisis data dilakukan dengan regresi linear berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketidaksesuaian warna kulit ($p < 0,05$) dan jenis kulit ($p < 0,05$) berpengaruh negatif dan signifikan terhadap minat pembelian ulang. Sebaliknya ketidaksesuaian iklim tidak memberikan pengaruh signifikan ($p > 0,05$). Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa responden masih dapat menerima ketidaknyamanan tekstur produk selama tidak menimbulkan whitecast atau jerawat. Temuan tersebut menegaskan bahwa ketidaksesuaian formulasi menjadi tantangan pengembangan produk. Merek Tiongkok perlu menyesuaikan formulasi dengan warna dan karakteristik fisiologis kulit konsumen Indonesia agar mampu bersaing di pasar lokal.

Kata Kunci: Ketidaksesuaian Formulasi, Minat Pembelian Ulang, Produk Perawatan Kulit Tiongkok, Warna Kulit, Perawatan Kulit Lintas Negara.

Abstract

This study investigates how perceived formulation mismatch affects the repurchase intention of Chinese skincare products among Indonesian consumers. As Chinese skincare brands rapidly expand into Indonesia, complaints regarding product suitability such as whitecast, heavy textures, and skin irritation have emerged. Drawing on the concept of product-consumer fit, this research examines three dimensions of mismatch: skin tone mismatch, climate mismatch, and skin type mismatch. Data were collected from 68 Indonesian university students

currently studying in China through an online questionnaire using purposive and snowball sampling. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results reveal that skin tone mismatch ($p < 0.05$) and skin type mismatch ($p < 0.05$) have a significant negative effect on repurchase intention. However, climate mismatch does not have a significant effect ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that respondents may tolerate sensory discomfort (such as greasy texture) as long as the product does not leave a visible whitecast or cause breakouts. The findings suggest that formulation mismatch is a product development challenge, not merely a marketing issue. For Chinese brands to succeed in Indonesia, formulations must be adapted to local skin tones and physiological skin profiles, rather than simply exported.

Keywords : Formulation Mismatch, Repurchase Intention, Chinese Skincare, Skin Tone, Cross-Border Skincare

LATAR BELAKANG

Chinese skincare brands have become major players in the Indonesian market. In just a few years, names like SKINTIFIC, Y.O.U, and The Originote have dominated the top-selling lists on Indonesian e-commerce platforms (AMZ123, 2025). This expansion reflects a broader regional trend: Chinese cosmetics exports to ASEAN grew by 34% annually between 2020 and 2025, with Indonesia absorbing approximately 28% of that total volume (Products, 2025). For many Indonesian consumers, what was once a foreign product category has now become a familiar daily staple.

Yet, this rapid growth has not been without problems. A growing number of consumers report that some Chinese skincare products do not suit their skin, citing issues such as severe whitecast from sunscreens, heavy textures in hot weather, and breakouts after use (Nofreza, 2025); (Nabila, 2024). While previous research suggests that Indonesian consumers generally accept Chinese cosmetics due to their functional quality and competitive pricing (Thenyson et al., 2026), these specific complaints indicate a deeper issue. The problem is not merely about product quality or country image; it points to a fundamental mismatch between how Chinese products are formulated and what Indonesian skin actually requires.

There are three physiological and environmental factors driving this formulation mismatch. First is skin tone. Indonesian consumers predominantly have Fitzpatrick type III–V skin, whereas Chinese consumers are mostly type I–III. Physical UV filters, such as titanium dioxide (TiO_2), widely used in Chinese formulations, leave a visible white residue that is far more noticeable on darker skin (Shyr et al., 2023). Second is climate. China has a temperate climate, while Indonesia is tropical. Formulations designed for temperate conditions often feel too heavy or greasy in Indonesian humidity (Xinhua, 2024). Third is skin type. Studies have found that Indonesian women have the highest skin surface pH among several Asian countries, including China (Korea Science, 2017); (Moon et al., 2025). This difference affects how products interact with the skin barrier, potentially leading to irritation or breakouts.

Despite the clear physiological differences between the two populations, most existing studies on skincare in Indonesia heavily focus on marketing variables, brand image, or general perceived quality (Dewi et al., 2023); (Mahri et al., 2023); (Salim & Widowati, 2026). Few

studies have examined the physical product itself. Furthermore, while research on cross-border skincare exists, there is a lack of empirical studies that specifically measure how "formulation mismatch" (in terms of skin tone, climate, and skin type) influences consumer behavior.

This study addresses that gap by introducing formulation mismatch as a measurable, multi-dimensional construct. Instead of viewing the issue through a marketing lens, this research approaches it from a product-consumer fit perspective. By focusing on Indonesian university students currently living in China a demographic with direct exposure to both markets this study offers a unique and objective perspective on how physiological differences dictate product suitability.

Based on this framework, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: Perceived skin tone mismatch negatively affects repurchase intention.
- H2: Perceived climate mismatch negatively affects repurchase intention.
- H3: Perceived skin type mismatch negatively affects repurchase intention

METODE

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional research design. Data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire distributed to Indonesian university students currently studying in China. This approach was selected to examine the relationships between product formulation mismatch and repurchase intention and to measure the effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable.

The target population consisted of Indonesian students enrolled at universities in China. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: Indonesian citizenship; current enrollment at a university in China; and previous experience using at least one Chinese skincare product. Snowball sampling was also applied to reach additional participants through referrals from initial respondents. A total of 68 respondents participated in this study and provided data for multiple linear regression analysis.

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The measurement items were adapted from previous literature and adjusted to the context of Chinese skincare products among Indonesian consumers. The independent variables consisted of Skin Tone Mismatch (ST), Climate Mismatch (CM), and Skin Type Mismatch (SP), while Repurchase Intention (RI) served as the dependent variable. Each variable was measured using three indicators as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement of Research Variables

Variable	Code	Measurement Item
Skin Tone Mismatch	ST1	Chinese skincare products leave a white cast on my skin.
	ST2	The results of Chinese skincare products do not look natural on my skin tone.
	ST3	Chinese skincare products are not designed for skin tones like mine.

Climate Mismatch	CM1	Chinese skincare products feel too heavy for tropical climates.
	CM2	Chinese skincare products make my skin feel greasy or sticky in hot weather.
	CM3	Chinese skincare products do not hold up well against sweat.
Skin Type Mismatch	SP1	Chinese skincare products cause breakouts on my skin.
	SP2	Chinese skincare products make my skin feel uncomfortable.
	SP3	Chinese skincare products do not suit my skin type.
Repurchase Intention	RI1	I intend to repurchase Chinese skincare products.
	RI2	I will recommend Chinese skincare products to others.
	RI3	I will continue using Chinese skincare products in the future.

Data collection was conducted using Google Forms over a three-week period. The questionnaire link was distributed through WhatsApp and Instagram as well as WeChat groups involving Indonesian students in China. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents completed the questionnaire independently without disclosing personal identifying information.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Before hypothesis testing, the measurement instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability tests. The Pearson correlation test was used to assess item validity. An item was considered valid when its calculated r-value exceeded the r-table value of 0.239 with 66 degrees of freedom at a 5% significance level. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70 to assess the internal consistency of the measurement items.

Classical assumption tests were subsequently conducted to evaluate the suitability of the regression model. Normality was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on the unstandardized residuals. A significance value greater than 0.05 indicated a normal distribution. Multicollinearity was assessed using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. The model was considered free from multicollinearity when Tolerance exceeded 0.10 and VIF remained below 10. Heteroscedasticity was examined using the Glejser test. A significance value above 0.05 for each independent variable indicated the absence of heteroscedasticity.

Multiple linear regression analysis was then performed to examine the effects of Skin Tone Mismatch (ST), Climate Mismatch (CM), and Skin Type Mismatch (SP) on Repurchase Intention (RI). The F-test was used to assess the simultaneous effects of the independent variables while the t-test examined their individual effects. Hypotheses were considered statistically significant when the p-value was below 0.05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also examined to determine the proportion of variation in repurchase intention explained by the three formulation mismatch variables.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Before conducting hypothesis testing, the validity and reliability of the research instrument were evaluated using responses from 68 participants. The Pearson correlation test was used to determine the validity of each questionnaire item. With 66 degrees of freedom and a 5% significance level, the r-table value was 0.239. An item was considered valid when its calculated r-value exceeded this threshold. The results presented in Table 2 show that all measurement items have r-count values greater than 0.239. Therefore all items were considered valid for measuring their respective variables.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Variable	Item	R-Count	R-Table	Status
Skin Tone Mismatch (ST)	ST1	0.945	0.239	Valid
	ST2	0.965	0.239	Valid
	ST3	0.936	0.239	Valid
Climate Mismatch (CM)	CM1	0.889	0.239	Valid
	CM2	0.942	0.239	Valid
	CM3	0.917	0.239	Valid
Skin Type Mismatch (SP)	SP1	0.915	0.239	Valid
	SP2	0.949	0.239	Valid
	SP3	0.945	0.239	Valid
Repurchase Intention (RI)	RI1	0.949	0.239	Valid
	RI2	0.945	0.239	Valid
	RI3	0.976	0.239	Valid

Source: Primary data processed by the authors.

The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70. As shown in Table 3 all variables achieved coefficients above this threshold. Skin Tone Mismatch obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.944 while Climate Mismatch reached 0.871. Skin Type Mismatch recorded 0.846 and Repurchase Intention achieved 0.952. These results indicate that all research variables have satisfactory internal consistency and that the questionnaire is reliable for further statistical analysis.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Threshold	Status
Skin Tone Mismatch (ST)	0.944	>0.70	Reliable
Climate Mismatch (CM)	0.871	>0.70	Reliable
Skin Type Mismatch (SP)	0.846	>0.70	Reliable
Repurchase Intention (RI)	0.952	>0.70	Reliable

Source: Primary data processed by the authors.

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to provide an overview of the responses for each research variable. Table 4 presents the minimum and maximum values as well as the mean and standard deviation. Repurchase Intention had the highest mean score of 9.09 followed by Skin Tone Mismatch at 7.65 and Climate Mismatch at 7.19. Skin Type Mismatch recorded the lowest mean score of 6.69. These results describe the distribution of respondents' perceptions across the four variables.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Skin Tone Mismatch (ST)	3	15	7.65	3.322
Climate Mismatch (CM)	3	13	7.19	2.313
Skin Type Mismatch (SP)	3	14	6.69	2.684
Repurchase Intention (RI)	3	15	9.09	2.931

Source: Primary data processed by the authors.

Before performing multiple linear regression analysis the classical assumption tests were conducted to evaluate the suitability of the regression model. The normality test used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method on the unstandardized residuals. The result produced an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.066 which exceeded the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that the residuals were normally distributed. The normality assessment was also supported by the histogram and Normal P-P Plot presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

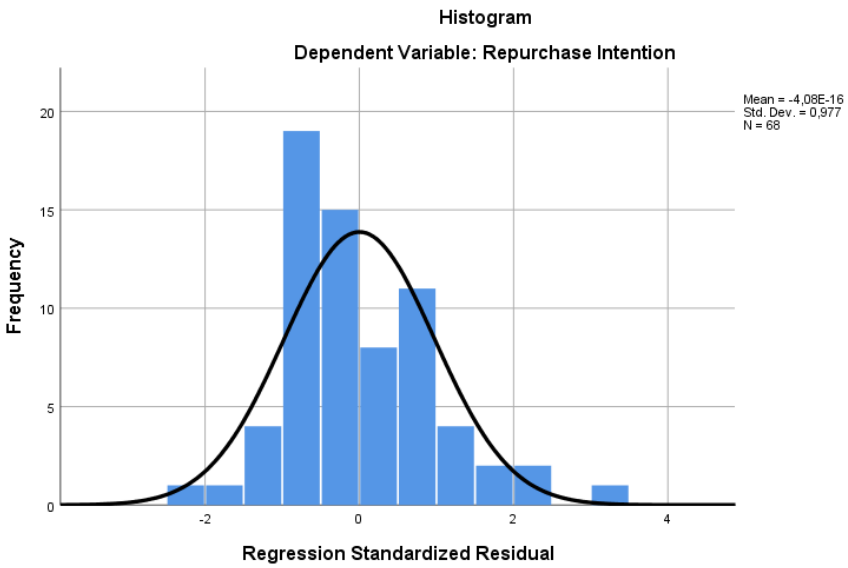


Figure 1. Histogram of Normality Test

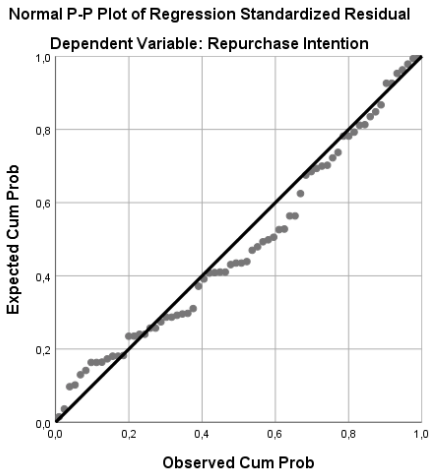


Figure 2. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

The multicollinearity test was conducted by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. The results in Table 5 show that all independent variables had Tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values below 10. Skin Tone Mismatch recorded a Tolerance of 0.489 and a VIF of 2.043. Climate Mismatch had a Tolerance of 0.455 and a VIF of 2.200 while Skin Type Mismatch recorded a Tolerance of 0.316 and a VIF of 3.165. These findings indicate that multicollinearity was not present among the independent variables.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Status
Skin Tone Mismatch (ST)	0.489	2.043	No Multicollinearity
Climate Mismatch (CM)	0.455	2.200	No Multicollinearity
Skin Type Mismatch (SP)	0.316	3.165	No Multicollinearity

Source: Primary data processed by the authors.

Furthermore the Glejser test was used to examine heteroscedasticity. The results showed that the significance values of all independent variables exceeded 0.05. This indicates that the regression model did not exhibit heteroscedasticity and met the tested classical assumptions for further regression analysis.

Multiple linear regression analysis was subsequently performed to examine the effects of Skin Tone Mismatch (ST) Climate Mismatch (CM) and Skin Type Mismatch (SP) on Repurchase Intention (RI). The regression results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	B (Unstandardized Coefficient)	t-count	Sig. t	Status
Constant	14.807	–	–	–
Skin Tone Mismatch (ST)	-0.438	-4.649	0.000	Significant
Climate Mismatch (CM)	0.106	0.756	0.453	Not Significant
Skin Type Mismatch (SP)	-0.468	-3.227	0.002	Significant
F-count	38.428	–	0.000	Significant
R Square	0.643	–	–	–

Source: Primary data processed by the authors.

Based on these results the regression equation is expressed as follows:

$$RI = 14.807 - 0.438ST + 0.106CM - 0.468SP + e$$

The constant value of 14.807 indicates the predicted Repurchase Intention score when all independent variables are zero. Skin Tone Mismatch has a negative regression coefficient of -0.438. This means that every one-unit increase in perceived skin tone mismatch is associated with a 0.438-point decrease in repurchase intention when the other variables remain constant. Climate Mismatch has a positive coefficient of 0.106. However its significance value of 0.453 indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant. Meanwhile Skin Type Mismatch has a negative coefficient of -0.468 which means that every one-unit increase in perceived skin type mismatch is associated with a 0.468-point decrease in repurchase intention when the other variables are held constant.

The partial hypothesis testing results indicate that Skin Tone Mismatch has a negative and significant effect on Repurchase Intention ($t = -4.649$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore H1 is accepted. Climate Mismatch does not have a significant effect on Repurchase Intention ($t = 0.756$; $p = 0.453$). Thus H2 is rejected. Skin Type Mismatch also demonstrates a negative and significant effect on Repurchase Intention ($t = -3.227$; $p = 0.002$). Therefore H3 is accepted. The simultaneous test further shows that the three independent variables have a significant combined effect on Repurchase Intention with an F-count of 38.428 and a significance value below 0.05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.643 which means that 64.3% of the variation in Repurchase Intention can be explained by Skin Tone Mismatch Climate Mismatch and Skin Type Mismatch. The remaining 35.7% is associated with other variables outside the research model.

The findings provide partial support for the proposed framework and indicate that consumers' perceptions of product suitability are relevant to their intention to repurchase Chinese skincare products. Consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) negative evaluations of product experiences can influence consumers' behavioral intentions. In this study the effects of formulation mismatch differ across the three dimensions examined. Skin tone and skin type mismatch demonstrate significant negative relationships with

repurchase intention while climate mismatch does not show a statistically significant relationship.

The first finding confirms that Skin Tone Mismatch significantly decreases Repurchase Intention. This result highlights the importance of physical compatibility in cross-border skincare products. Chinese skincare formulations that are not suitable for darker Southeast Asian skin tones may produce a visible white cast or an unnatural appearance after application. Indonesian consumers predominantly have Fitzpatrick skin types III to V and physical UV filters such as titanium dioxide may leave visible white residue on certain skin tones. This finding is consistent with dermatological research by Shyr et al. (2023) and Kohli (2026) which emphasized that universal cosmetic formulations do not always provide suitable results across different skin tones. When consumers experience visible white residue they may perceive the product as unsuitable for their appearance even when its intended protective function is maintained. This negative experience can reduce their willingness to purchase the product again.

In contrast Climate Mismatch does not have a significant effect on Repurchase Intention. This finding suggests that product characteristics associated with tropical climates such as heavy textures and greasy or sticky sensations are not necessarily decisive factors in consumers' repurchase decisions within this sample. Although previous industry reports have suggested that imported skincare products may face difficulties in tropical climates because of their heavier formulations (Xinhua, 2024) the results of this study do not confirm a significant relationship between climate mismatch and repurchase intention. This finding differs from Indonesian consumer studies by Oktavianto et al. (2024) and Steven & Setiawan (2023) which identified product quality and sensory experience as factors influencing repurchase intention. One possible explanation is that Indonesian students living in China may have become accustomed to using different product textures. Other considerations such as affordable prices and strong brand popularity may also influence their purchasing decisions (Thenyson et al., 2026). Nevertheless these explanations require further investigation because the present study did not directly measure price sensitivity brand popularity or consumer adaptation. The result therefore indicates that climate mismatch was not a significant predictor of repurchase intention among the respondents rather than demonstrating that climate suitability is unimportant to all Indonesian consumers.

The third finding confirms that Skin Type Mismatch has a negative and significant effect on Repurchase Intention. This result indicates that products perceived as unsuitable for an individual's skin type may reduce the willingness to purchase them again. Experiences such as breakouts and skin discomfort can become important considerations when evaluating skincare products. Differences in skin barrier function have been documented in previous research (Korea Science, 2017); (Moon et al., 2025). This finding is also consistent with Indonesian skincare consumer studies by Okayani & Panasea (2025) on Facetology Wandani (2025) and Dewi et al. (2023) which highlighted the importance of product suitability and perceived quality in customer satisfaction and repurchase decisions. Unlike white cast which is immediately visible skin discomfort and breakouts may develop after repeated product application. Such experiences can influence consumer confidence in the product and reduce their intention to purchase it again.

Taken together the findings demonstrate that formulation mismatch consists of several dimensions with different relationships to repurchase intention. Skin tone and skin type compatibility appear to be more relevant to repurchase decisions in this study than climate compatibility. This result supports the findings of Ristya Hadi (2024), Widyastuti & Said (2023) and Yuliana & Hidayat (2023) which emphasized the importance of product quality and suitability in skincare repurchase intention. For Chinese skincare brands the challenge is therefore not limited to providing affordable products or developing effective social media marketing strategies. Product formulations also need to consider the physiological characteristics and appearance-related expectations of consumers in the target market. The findings further challenge the assumption that geographical and cultural proximity among Asian countries automatically guarantees product compatibility.

From a theoretical perspective this study contributes to cross-border skincare research by shifting attention from conventional marketing factors such as price and brand image toward physiological product-consumer fit. Previous studies on Chinese skincare products in Indonesia have largely emphasized marketing strategies while this research highlights formulation compatibility as another factor associated with consumer retention. The study also examines formulation mismatch as a multidimensional construct consisting of skin tone mismatch climate mismatch and skin type mismatch. This classification provides a framework that future researchers can examine in other cross-border skincare markets.

The findings also extend previous research on repurchase intention. Studies by Janati & Yudistria (2026) on Korean skincare and Sang & Kanthawongs (2025) on Nivea skincare in Bangkok identified brand trust and attitudes toward advertising as important factors influencing repurchase intention. Meanwhile Indonesian studies have frequently focused on marketing and brand image (Huong et al., 2024); (Mahri et al., 2023); (Salim & Widowati, 2026). The present findings add another perspective by showing that perceived physiological suitability is significantly associated with repurchase intention for certain dimensions of Chinese skincare products. Marketing strategies may attract consumers to try a product but product compatibility remains an important consideration in encouraging repeat purchases.

In practical terms Chinese skincare brands targeting the Indonesian market should consider three priorities. First products particularly sunscreen and leave-on formulations should be tested on different skin tones to reduce visible white cast. Second lightweight formulations should be developed with consideration for tropical humidity and consumers' preferences regarding product texture. Third product development should pay closer attention to skin barrier compatibility and pH characteristics rather than focusing exclusively on active ingredients. For Indonesian consumers the findings also provide a perspective for understanding why imported skincare products may produce different experiences across individuals. Products that cause breakouts or leave a visible white cast are not necessarily ineffective in every context but may not be suitable for particular skin characteristics.

This study has several limitations. First the sample consisted only of Indonesian university students studying in China. Therefore the findings cannot automatically be generalized to the wider Indonesian consumer population particularly those who have never lived abroad. Second the research relied on self-reported perceptions rather than objective clinical measurements of skin characteristics and product performance. Third the cross-

sectional design captured respondents' perceptions at a single point in time and could not explain how their evaluations of formulation mismatch might change through long-term product use.

Future research should involve a broader sample of Indonesian consumers including individuals who have never lived in China. Further studies could also examine formulation mismatch using objective measurements such as white cast intensity and pH changes across different skin tones and skin types under laboratory conditions. Comparative research involving Korean and Japanese skincare brands could also help determine whether formulation mismatch is specific to Chinese skincare products or represents a broader challenge in the cross-border skincare industry.

SIMPULAN

This study examined how perceived formulation mismatch affects repurchase intention among Indonesian university students using Chinese skincare products. The findings conclude that while skin tone and skin type mismatches significantly reduce repurchase intention, climate mismatch does not have a significant effect in this specific context. Formulation mismatch is not merely a marketing problem it is a product development problem. For Chinese brands to succeed in Indonesia, products must be designed with Indonesian consumers' physiological needs in mind, rather than simply exported.

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