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Drivers of Consumer Purchase Decisions on TikTok: A Social Commerce Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Purpose This study aims to examine the key drivers of consumer purchase decisions on TikTok from a social commerce perspective. Specifically, it investigates the roles of content quality, influencer credibility, perceived usefulness, and trust in shaping purchasing behavior within TikTok-based commerce environments.

Methodology A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 220 TikTok users who had previously made purchases through the platform using an accidental sampling technique. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, supported by validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS.

Findings The results reveal that content quality, influencer credibility, perceived usefulness, and trust all have positive and significant effects on consumer purchase decisions on TikTok. Among these factors, trust and perceived usefulness emerged as the strongest predictors, indicating that both technological and relational aspects play a critical role in social commerce purchasing behavior.

Contribution This study contributes to the literature by extending the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) into the context of TikTok-based social commerce and integrating it with social commerce theory. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for marketers, influencers, and platform-based sellers in designing effective content strategies and trust-building mechanisms to enhance purchase decisions on TikTok.

Keywords: TikTok; social commerce; purchase decision; content quality; influencer credibility; trust

INTRODUCTION

The rapid diffusion of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the landscape of digital commerce. Globally, social commerce has emerged as a hybrid ecosystem where social interaction, content creation, and online purchasing converge,

reshaping how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Among social media platforms, TikTok has experienced unprecedented growth, evolving from a short-video entertainment application into a powerful social commerce channel. With its algorithm-driven content delivery, interactive features, and seamless integration of shopping functions, TikTok has altered traditional consumer decision-making processes by embedding commerce within entertainment and social engagement (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2021).

From a national and regional perspective, TikTok-based commerce has expanded rapidly in emerging markets, particularly in Southeast Asia, where mobile-first consumers increasingly rely on social media for product information and purchasing decisions. The integration of live streaming, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content has intensified competition among sellers and heightened consumer exposure to persuasive marketing stimuli. As a result, consumer purchase decisions in this environment are no longer driven solely by utilitarian considerations but are shaped by social influence, perceived usefulness, trust, and engagement embedded in platform interactions (Hajli et al., 2017).

Within the broader field of marketing and consumer behavior, social commerce represents a critical extension of electronic commerce research. Unlike conventional e-commerce platforms that emphasize transactional efficiency, social commerce emphasizes social interaction, content credibility, and relational value. TikTok exemplifies this shift by leveraging short-form videos, algorithmic personalization, and parasocial interactions between content creators and viewers. Consequently, understanding purchase decisions on TikTok requires an integrative perspective that combines technology acceptance, social influence, and trust-based theories (Liang et al., 2018).

Empirically, TikTok has become a dominant shopping discovery platform, where consumers frequently encounter products through influencer videos, live shopping sessions, and peer recommendations. In practice, many purchase decisions occur impulsively, triggered by engaging content rather than deliberate information search. Despite high engagement rates, consumer trust, perceived value, and content credibility remain critical determinants of whether exposure translates into actual purchase behavior. These dynamics highlight the complexity of purchase decision-making in TikTok-based social commerce environments.

However, several research problems remain unresolved. First, existing studies often examine social commerce broadly without distinguishing TikTok's unique algorithmic and content-driven mechanisms. Second, prior findings on the effects of marketing content, influencer credibility, and trust on purchase decisions are inconsistent. While some studies report strong direct effects (Lou & Yuan, 2019), others suggest indirect or context-dependent relationships (Koay et al., 2022). Third, empirical evidence focusing specifically on TikTok as a commerce platform remains limited, particularly in emerging market contexts.

This inconsistency reveals a clear research gap. Most prior studies focus on platforms such as Instagram or Facebook, apply fragmented theoretical frameworks, or examine isolated variables without an integrated model. There is limited research that systematically examines the combined effects of content quality, influencer credibility, perceived usefulness, and trust on consumer purchase decisions within TikTok-based social commerce.

This study draws primarily on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and social commerce theory. TAM posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use influence

behavioral intention, while social commerce theory emphasizes trust, social presence, and interaction as drivers of online purchasing behavior (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Hajli, 2015). By integrating these perspectives, this research offers a comprehensive framework for understanding purchase decisions on TikTok.

The study positions itself as an empirical investigation that extends TAM into a social commerce context, specifically TikTok. Its key contribution lies in providing context-specific evidence on how technological perceptions and social factors jointly shape purchase decisions. Practically, the findings offer strategic insights for marketers, influencers, and platform-based sellers.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine the drivers of consumer purchase decisions on TikTok by analyzing the roles of content quality, influencer credibility, perceived usefulness, and trust within a social commerce framework.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among content quality, influencer credibility, perceived usefulness, trust, and consumer purchase decisions on TikTok. A quantitative approach was selected because the research aims to test theoretically grounded hypotheses and measure the magnitude and direction of relationships among variables using statistical techniques. The explanatory design is appropriate for identifying determinants of consumer behavior and explaining how multiple independent variables influence a dependent variable in a structured model (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, in which data were collected at a single point in time. This design is suitable for capturing consumers' current perceptions and experiences of TikTok-based social commerce, particularly in a rapidly evolving digital environment. Moreover, a cross-sectional approach allows for efficient data collection and supports replikability, enabling future researchers to test the same model in different contexts or periods.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consists of TikTok users who have previously made at least one purchase through TikTok-based social commerce features, such as live shopping, product links, or in-video purchase prompts. This population was selected because direct purchasing experience is essential for accurately evaluating the factors influencing purchase decisions.

Due to the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame for TikTok consumers, the population was treated as infinite. Consequently, sampling was conducted using a non-probability approach. A total of 220 valid responses were obtained and included in the final analysis, which exceeds the minimum sample size required for multivariate analysis and ensures sufficient statistical power.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination

This study utilized non-probability accidental sampling, where respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, provided they met the predefined criteria. This technique is commonly used in social commerce and

digital marketing research, where access to a complete list of users is limited and the population is highly dynamic.

The determination of sample size followed the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2019), which recommend a minimum of 10 times the number of indicators used in the research model for regression-based analysis. With 11 observed indicators included in this study, the minimum recommended sample size was 110 respondents. The final sample size of 220 respondents therefore meets and exceeds this requirement, enhancing the reliability and robustness of the findings.

Data Collection Technique

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed online. Online data collection was chosen due to its suitability for reaching active TikTok users and its efficiency in terms of time and cost. The questionnaire was designed in English and consisted of two main sections: respondent demographic information and measurement items for the research variables.

To ensure content validity, measurement items were adapted from established and validated scales in prior studies related to social commerce, influencer marketing, and technology acceptance. A pilot test involving a small group of respondents was conducted prior to the main survey to ensure clarity, readability, and reliability of the questionnaire items.

Operational Definition of Variables and Measurement Indicators

Each construct in this study was defined operationally to ensure accurate and consistent measurement. Content Quality refers to the extent to which TikTok marketing content is perceived as informative, entertaining, credible, and relevant to consumers' needs. It was measured using indicators related to information usefulness, visual attractiveness, and message clarity. Influencer Credibility is defined as consumers' perception of an influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity when promoting products on TikTok. Measurement indicators include perceived expertise and honesty of the influencer.

Perceived Usefulness represents the degree to which consumers believe that TikTok helps them make better and more efficient purchase decisions. Indicators include decision support and time efficiency. Trust refers to consumers' confidence in TikTok as a platform, as well as their trust in sellers and influencers operating within it. Measurement items capture platform reliability and seller honesty. Purchase Decision is defined as the consumer's actual behavior and intention to purchase products through TikTok. Indicators include purchase intention, purchase frequency, and willingness to recommend.

Measurement Scale

All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The Likert scale was chosen because it effectively captures respondents' attitudes and perceptions in behavioral research and allows for parametric statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2019).

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis to test the proposed hypotheses and evaluate the effects of independent variables on consumer purchase decisions. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were subjected to validity and

reliability tests to ensure measurement accuracy. Additionally, classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, were performed to confirm the suitability of the regression model.

The coefficient of determination (R^2), F-test, and t-test were used to assess the explanatory power of the model, the simultaneous effect of independent variables, and the partial effects of each predictor, respectively. A significance level of 5% was applied throughout the analysis.

Statistical Software

All statistical analyses were performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)**.** SPSS was selected due to its robustness in handling survey data, conducting regression analysis, and performing diagnostic tests efficiently and accurately. The use of SPSS also enhances the transparency and replicability of the research process, allowing future researchers to reproduce the analysis using the same procedures and dataset.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent Profile

A total of 220 valid responses were collected from TikTok users who had previously made purchases through the platform. The majority of respondents were aged 18–34 years, reflecting TikTok's dominant user demographic. Female respondents slightly outnumbered males, indicating higher engagement in social commerce activities. Most respondents reported purchasing products on TikTok at least once per month, suggesting sufficient experience to evaluate content quality, influencer credibility, trust, and purchase decisions. These characteristics indicate that the respondents are appropriate for examining consumer purchase behavior within TikTok-based social commerce.

Validity Test

The validity test was conducted using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. An item is considered valid if the correlation coefficient exceeds 0.30 and the significance value is below 0.05.

Table 1. Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (p-value)	Result
Content Quality	CQ1	0.742	0.000	Valid
	CQ2	0.768	0.000	Valid
	CQ3	0.731	0.000	Valid
Influencer Credibility	IC1	0.755	0.000	Valid
	IC2	0.782	0.000	Valid
Perceived Usefulness	PU1	0.801	0.000	Valid
	PU2	0.776	0.000	Valid
Trust	TR1	0.793	0.000	Valid
	TR2	0.765	0.000	Valid

Variable	Indicator	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (p-value)	Result
Purchase Decision	PD1	0.821	0.000	Valid
	PD2	0.798	0.000	Valid

Table 1 presents the results of the validity test for all measurement indicators used in this study. The findings indicate that all items exhibit Pearson correlation coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.30, with significance values below 0.05. These results confirm that each indicator is strongly associated with its corresponding construct, demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity. Consequently, the measurement items are deemed appropriate for capturing the underlying dimensions of content quality, influencer credibility, perceived usefulness, trust, and consumer purchase decisions within the TikTok-based social commerce context.

Reliability Test

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold value of 0.70.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Content Quality	3	0.836	Reliable
Influencer Credibility	2	0.812	Reliable
Perceived Usefulness	2	0.845	Reliable
Trust	2	0.828	Reliable
Purchase Decision	2	0.861	Reliable

Table 2 summarizes the reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. All constructs show alpha values above the minimum acceptable level of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency among the measurement items. This suggests that the indicators within each variable reliably measure the same underlying concept. The high reliability values strengthen confidence in the stability and consistency of the measurement instrument used in this study.

Normality Test

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was employed to examine data normality.

Table 3. Normality Test Results

Test Statistic	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Conclusion
0.067	0.200	Normally distributed

Table 3 reports the results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test. The significance value exceeds the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the residuals are normally distributed. This result confirms that the assumption of normality is satisfied, supporting the appropriateness of applying parametric statistical techniques, particularly multiple linear regression analysis, in this study.Multicollinearity Test

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Conclusion
Content Quality	0.621	1.610	No multicollinearity

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Conclusion
Influencer Credibility	0.658	1.520	No multicollinearity
Perceived Usefulness	0.603	1.658	No multicollinearity
Trust	0.589	1.698	No multicollinearity

The multicollinearity test results presented in Table 4 show that all independent variables have tolerance values above 0.10 and variance inflation factor (VIF) values well below the critical value of 10. These findings indicate the absence of multicollinearity among the predictor variables, suggesting that each independent variable contributes uniquely to explaining variations in consumer purchase decisions without redundancy or excessive correlation.

Heteroscedasticity Test

The Glejser test was used to detect heteroscedasticity.

Table 5. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Variable	Sig. (p-value)	Conclusion
Content Quality	0.312	No heteroscedasticity
Influencer Credibility	0.427	No heteroscedasticity
Perceived Usefulness	0.389	No heteroscedasticity
Trust	0.451	No heteroscedasticity

Table 5 displays the results of the Glejser heteroscedasticity test. The significance values for all independent variables exceed 0.05, indicating that the variance of the residuals is constant across levels of the predictors. This confirms that the regression model does not suffer from heteroscedasticity, thereby meeting one of the key assumptions required for unbiased and efficient regression estimates.

Table 6. t-Test Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	Sig.	Decision
H1	Content Quality → Purchase Decision	0.231	3.412	0.001	Supported
H2	Influencer Credibility → Purchase Decision	0.198	2.987	0.003	Supported
H3	Perceived Usefulness → Purchase Decision	0.279	4.126	0.000	Supported
H4	Trust → Purchase Decision	0.315	4.784	0.000	Supported

Table 6 reports the results of the t-test for hypothesis testing. The findings show that all independent variables have positive and statistically significant effects on consumer purchase decisions. This indicates that each predictor independently contributes to explaining purchasing behavior on TikTok. Notably, trust and perceived usefulness exhibit stronger effects compared to content quality and influencer credibility, highlighting the critical role of relational and technological factors in social commerce decision-making.

Discussion

Effect of Content Quality on Purchase Decisions

The findings reveal that content quality has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase decisions. This suggests that informative, entertaining, and credible TikTok content enhances consumers' understanding and emotional engagement, which ultimately encourages purchasing behavior.

This result supports the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), particularly the notion that well-designed information systems enhance perceived usefulness and decision efficiency. The finding is consistent with Cheung et al. (2020), who reported that high-quality social media content positively influences consumer engagement and purchase intention.

In the TikTok context, algorithm-driven short videos amplify content visibility, making quality a critical competitive advantage. Practically, brands should prioritize authenticity and storytelling rather than purely promotional content.

Effect of Influencer Credibility on Purchase Decisions

Influencer credibility significantly influences purchase decisions, highlighting the importance of trustworthiness and expertise in influencer marketing. This finding aligns with source credibility theory, which posits that credible communicators exert stronger persuasive influence.

Consistent with Lou and Yuan (2019), this study confirms that influencer credibility reduces perceived risk in social commerce. In TikTok's environment, parasocial interaction strengthens emotional bonds between influencers and followers, intensifying purchasing effects. Marketers should carefully select influencers whose personal brand aligns with product values.

Effect of Perceived Usefulness on Purchase Decisions

Perceived usefulness emerged as a strong predictor of purchase decisions. This supports TAM's core assumption that consumers adopt platforms that enhance task performance. In TikTok-based commerce, usefulness stems from product demonstrations, reviews, and experiential content. This finding aligns with Zhou et al. (2018), who found perceived usefulness to be a key mediator in social commerce adoption. Practically, sellers should design content that simplifies decision-making rather than focusing solely on entertainment.

Effect of Trust on Purchase Decisions

Trust demonstrated the strongest influence on purchase decisions, confirming its central role in social commerce theory. Consumers are more willing to purchase when they trust the platform, sellers, and influencers. This finding supports Hajli (2015), emphasizing trust as a foundational element in online transactions. TikTok's interactive environment magnifies trust effects, as repeated exposure fosters familiarity and confidence. For practitioners, building transparent communication and consistent service quality is essential for sustaining consumer trust.

CONCLUSIONS

his study investigates the key drivers of consumer purchase decisions on TikTok from a social commerce perspective. The findings demonstrate that purchase decisions on TikTok are not shaped by a single factor, but rather by an integrated set of content-related, social, and technological determinants. Content quality, influencer credibility,

perceived usefulness, and trust all play significant roles in influencing consumers' purchasing behavior within the TikTok environment.

In response to the research objectives, the empirical results confirm that content quality positively affects purchase decisions by enhancing consumers' understanding and engagement with product information. Influencer credibility also significantly influences purchase decisions, underscoring the persuasive power of trusted and knowledgeable content creators. Moreover, perceived usefulness emerged as a strong predictor of purchasing behavior, indicating that consumers are more likely to buy products when TikTok content effectively supports their decision-making process.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the literature by extending the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) into the context of TikTok-based social commerce. By integrating TAM with social commerce theory, the findings highlight the importance of trust and social influence alongside technological perceptions. This integrated framework provides a more comprehensive explanation of consumer behavior on emerging social commerce platforms.

Practically, the findings offer important managerial implications for businesses, marketers, and content creators operating on TikTok. Firms should prioritize high-quality, authentic, and informative content rather than purely promotional messaging. Collaborating with credible influencers and building consumer trust through transparency, consistency, and reliable service are essential strategies for increasing purchase conversions in a highly competitive social commerce environment.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to capture changes in consumer behavior over time, and the reliance on non-probability sampling may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to adopt longitudinal approaches, include additional variables such as consumer engagement or perceived risk, and conduct comparative studies across different social commerce platforms to further enrich understanding of digital purchasing behavior.

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