

BRIDGING THE EXPOSURE-TO-PURCHASE GAP IN TIKTOK SHOP AFFILIATE MARKETING: A TRUST- CENTERED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Article history

Received date : 14-5-2026

Revised date : 15-5-2026

Accepted date : 20-6-2026

Published date : 30-6-2026

To cite this document:

Sahrim, A., Ali, A., Idris, A. R., Zulkifli, A. F., Zoolkefli, Z., Zainal Abidin, N. F., & Kamarulzaman, M. H. (2026). Bridging the exposure-to-purchase gap in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing: A trust-centered conceptual framework. *International Journal of Accounting, Finance and Business (IJAFB)*, 11 (65), 236 - 247.

Abstract: *The rapid growth of social commerce has transformed consumer purchasing behavior, particularly through TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, where content creators integrate entertainment with product promotion in an algorithm-driven environment. Despite high engagement levels, a persistent gap remains between content exposure and actual purchase conversion, indicating the importance of underlying psychological mechanisms. This study aims to examine the determinants of consumer purchase intention in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing by focusing on trust in influencer, content quality, perceived value, and social influence. It also investigates the mediating role of consumer trust in strengthening the relationship between these determinants and purchase intentions. Methodologically, this study employs a systematic conceptual review synthesizing peer-reviewed publications from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar (2015–2025) using explicit inclusion criteria and qualitative narrative synthesis. The framework illustrates how selected variables interact to influence consumer purchase intention through consumer trust while explicitly addressing*

conflicting literature, disclosure transparency, and commission incentive dynamics. In conclusion, the study highlights consumer trust as a key factor in translating engagement into purchase behavior. It contributes to social commerce literature by proposing a trust-centered framework and offers practical implications for marketers and influencers to enhance credibility, content effectiveness, and conversion rates in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing.

Keywords: *TikTok Shop, Affiliate Marketing, Purchase Intention, Consumer Trust, Quality*

Introduction

The digital landscape's rapid evolution has catalyzed a paradigm shift in consumer behavior, particularly through the emergence of social commerce. Social commerce integrates social media and e-commerce functionalities, enabling consumers to discover, evaluate, and purchase products within a unified digital environment (Hajli, 2015). Platforms such as TikTok have become dominant due to their short-form video format, algorithmic content distribution, and high engagement-driven architecture (Montag et al., 2021).

Within this ecosystem, TikTok Shop affiliate marketing represents a hybrid commercial model where content creators act simultaneously as entertainers, influencers, and sales intermediaries. This reflects the "shoppertainment" paradigm, where consumer decisions are shaped not only by product utility but also by emotional engagement and narrative persuasion (Pinantun & Amalia, 2024). TikTok's algorithm further amplifies content virality, accelerating product exposure and influencing consumer interaction patterns (Xie, 2026).

This situation reflects a structural limitation of algorithm-driven platforms: while TikTok maximizes exposure through engagement-based optimization, it does not guarantee credibility or trustworthiness. Consequently, a trust deficit emerges where high visibility does not necessarily lead to high conversion (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Xie, 2026). This raises a key theoretical question regarding how consumer trust mediates the relationship between exposure and purchase intention in affiliate-driven ecosystems.

Although influencer marketing and social commerce have been widely studied, three major gaps remain. First, existing research rarely distinguishes between traditional influencer marketing and affiliate-based ecosystems such as TikTok Shop, which operate under performance-driven incentives affecting authenticity and persuasion (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; De Veirman et al., 2023). Second, the mediating role of consumer trust in algorithm-driven environments remains underexplored, particularly in fast-paced short-video platforms (Kim & Peterson, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). Third, prior studies insufficiently integrate content quality, perceived value, and social influence within a unified framework tailored to TikTok's hybrid entertainment-commerce model (Pinantun & Amalia, 2024; Patwa et al., 2025).

To address these gaps, this study proposes a conceptual framework examining the determinants of consumer purchase intention in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, with consumer trust as a mediating variable. The model includes four independent variables: trust in influencer, content quality, perceived value, and social influence, which influence purchase intention both directly and indirectly through trust. Accordingly, this study has three objectives: To identify the determinants of consumer purchase intention in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing; To examine the mediating role of consumer trust in these relationships; and To develop a trust-centered

conceptual framework that integrates influencer marketing, content persuasion, and algorithmic influence to guide future research and practical applications.

Literature Review

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to consumers' willingness to purchase a product or service after evaluating available information and external stimuli. It is widely recognized as a strong predictor of actual purchasing behavior, particularly in online and digital commerce environments (Ajzen, 1991). In social commerce platforms such as TikTok, purchase intention is increasingly influenced by interactive content, influencer endorsements, and social engagement mechanisms embedded within algorithm-driven systems.

The emergence of TikTok Shop affiliate marketing has transformed purchasing behavior by integrating entertainment and commerce into a single platform. TikTok's short-form video content and personalized recommendations create immersive shopping experiences that influence consumers emotionally and cognitively (Wang, 2024; Lu et al., 2026). Recent studies indicate that purchase intention is strongly associated with content authenticity, influencer credibility, and online engagement quality (Alireza & Belem, 2025). Additionally, repeated exposure to affiliate-generated content increases product familiarity and perceived desirability, thereby strengthening consumers' intention to purchase (Rindfleisch & Inman, 2024; Park et al., 1998).

Trust in Influencer

Trust in the influencer represents a critical component within contemporary digital marketing, serving as a vital psychological mechanism that directly bridges environmental stimuli with subsequent customer purchase intentions. Underpinned by Source Credibility Theory, traditional persuasion models suggest that marketing messages resonate more powerfully when consumers evaluate a communicator across distinct dimensions, specifically expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Haryanto et al., 2026; Ohanian, 1990). However, in fast-paced, algorithm-driven social commerce platforms like TikTok, audience trust evaluations have shifted; surface-level attributes such as general popularity or vanity metrics do not inherently drive brand trust or sway final buying behaviors (Huynh & Ly, 2026; Xie, 2026). Instead, contemporary consumers demonstrate highly advanced media literacy and skepticism toward commercial intents, actively looking past follower counts to prioritize authentic competence and demonstrable specialized knowledge (Huynh & Ly, 2026).

Empirical Inconsistencies and Conflicting Findings

Despite the prevalent assertion that influencer credibility directly drives sales, empirical literature reveals notable conflicting and non-significant results regarding direct pathways. While conventional models confirm a strong direct relationship between influencer trustworthiness and purchase intention, emerging empirical evidence demonstrates that influencer credibility alone often fails to directly produce purchase conversions when platform-level uncertainty is high or when content is perceived as purely promotional (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018; Barta et al., 2023). For instance, high follower counts and visual attractiveness may successfully capture initial viewer attention yet produce non-significant effects on actual buying decisions if consumers detect commercial bias (Audrezet et al., 2020). This contradiction in the literature highlights that trust in the influencer does not function as a standalone guarantor of purchase conversion; rather, its operational strength is heavily contingent upon broader platform trust and transparent commercial disclosures.

Consequently, direct visual demonstrations of product knowledge, including technical breakdowns, product comparisons, and interactive tutorials, allow consumers to systematically minimize perceived transaction risks and verify utility before purchase commitment (Huynh & Ly, 2026). When an influencer establishes distinct relational closeness and presents consistent, transparent, and honest evaluations rather than forced, paid endorsements, consumers readily read the recommendation as reliable, trustworthy guidance (Haryanto et al., 2026). This deep sense of established interpersonal trust actively transfers from the content creator directly onto the endorsed brand and product (Huynh & Ly, 2026). Ultimately, cultivating consumer trust acts as the definitive operational anchor that reduces user skepticism, eliminates platform deficits, and translates passive content visibility into concrete purchase decisions (Munadia et al., 2024; Permatasari & Wahyudi, 2024).

Content Quality and Sponsored-Content Transparency

Content quality on short-form video platforms refers to the specific extent to which digital promotional material is meticulously designed to be highly informative, visually explicit, interactive, and entertaining for consumer decision-making (Haryanto et al., 2026). Grounded fundamentally in the Advertising Value Model and information-quality perspectives, the persuasive power of social commerce marketing is directly shaped by informational cues such as message clarity, detail completeness, source accuracy, and timeliness (Haryanto et al., 2026; Huynh & Ly, 2026). In the specialized "shoppertainment" ecosystem of TikTok, content design must transcend static product descriptions by synthesizing authentic narration with sensory visual elements (Pinantun & Amalia, 2024). High-quality video formats must explicitly showcase product details, menu choices, prices, ingredients, and realistic customer service experiences, effectively mitigating the structural uncertainty and cognitive effort inherent to digital transactions (Haryanto et al., 2026).

Empirical evidence indicates that dynamic content possessing strong visual aesthetics, creativity, and high-resolution appeal triggers a consumer's inner emotions and captures instant behavioral attention (Dwisyah et al., 2025; Moreno et al., 2024). However, empirical findings show that visual aesthetics alone produce non-significant impacts on purchase conversions if the underlying message lacks transparency or overstates product performance. Inflated claims, excessive visual editing, or hidden brand relationships can instantly erode user confidence and activate consumer persuasion coping mechanisms (Haryanto et al., 2026; Schumacher, 2025).

The Critical Role of Affiliate Disclosure and Commission Transparency

A central yet historically underdeveloped dimension in short-video commerce literature is the impact of affiliate disclosure mechanisms, commission incentives, and sponsored-content transparency. Grounded in the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), consumers continuously develop knowledge about commercial motives and marketing tactics (Friestad & Wright, 1994). In affiliate marketing environments where creators earn performance-based financial commissions per purchase, failure to disclose financial incentives creates severe psychological resistance once discovered.

Conversely, explicit commercial labelling such as utilizing native platform tags (#ad, #TikTokShopAffiliate, or commission disclosure banners) provides structural clarity and protects user rights (Haryanto et al., 2026; Schumacher, 2025). While sudden commercial disclosures can occasionally trigger short-term friction (Chapple & Cownie, 2017), pairing clear affiliate disclosures with balanced, honest product evaluations (highlighting both pros and cons) neutralizes consumer defense mechanisms. Clear, informative content paired with

transparent commercial disclosures and an enjoyable presentation creates a favorable impression of product value, resulting in heightened viewer engagement and a substantially stronger collective intent to purchase (Dwisyah et al., 2025; Haryanto et al., 2026).

Perceived Value

Perceived value plays a central role in the social commerce ecosystem, representing the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given. In the specific context of TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, perceived value extends beyond traditional functional utility to include emotional, social, and entertainment dimensions. This multidimensional value is amplified by the 'shoppertainment' nature of the platform, where content creators provide high-quality information and entertainment that reduces the cognitive effort required for product evaluation (Pinantun & Amalia, 2024). When consumers perceive high value in the affiliate content whether through price advantages, social trendiness, or the joy of the content itself their psychological commitment to the purchase increases significantly.

Recent literature underscores that in algorithm-driven environments, perceived value is no longer static but is dynamically shaped by the relevance of the content delivered to the user (Gombar, 2025). For instance, the fit between the creator's narrative and the user's personal interests enhances the perceived functional and emotional benefits of the transaction (Jiang & Chen, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of social value, where consumers feel a sense of belonging or prestige by participating in viral trends, acts as a powerful driver for purchase intention (Wang et al., 2025).

Theoretical Position and Conceptual Consistency of Perceived Value

To maintain theoretical consistency across the conceptual framework, perceived value is positioned strictly as a direct cognitive antecedent to consumer trust and purchasing attitudes, rather than a post-trust outcome or intermediary variable. Grounded in classical decision-making theory, consumers first perform a cognitive trade-off evaluation—weighing perceived functional, emotional, and economic benefits against transaction monetary and search costs. This cognitive evaluation directly shapes the consumer's favorable evaluation (attitude) and provides the rational baseline required to build psychological confidence (consumer trust).

Crucially, the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention is inherently tied to the level of trust the consumer has in the commercial ecosystem (Liu & Zhang, 2025). While high perceived value can attract initial interest, empirical findings indicate that value alone yields non-significant purchase conversions if risk levels remain unmitigated. The conversion from engagement to actual purchase requires a reduction in perceived risk, which is facilitated by consumer trust. In TikTok Shop's fast-paced environment, trust acts as a boundary condition; even if a product is perceived as highly valuable, a "trust deficit" regarding the influencer or the platform's security can negate the positive influence of perceived value on purchase intention (Liu & Zhang, 2025). Therefore, positioning perceived value as a direct antecedent within a trust-centered framework is essential to understand how value perceptions are successfully translated into commercial outcomes.

Social Influence

Social influence refers to the extent to which consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions are influenced by other people, online communities, and social media interactions. In social commerce, consumers often depend on social cues such as peer recommendations, online

reviews, likes, comments, shares, and trending content before making purchase decisions (Akar & Dalgic, 2018).

In TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, social influence is strengthened by viral videos, influencer recommendations, live selling, customer testimonials, and user-generated reviews. These elements create social proof, where consumers perceive a product as popular, trusted, and worth buying when many users engage with or recommend it (Patwa et al., 2025).

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), social influence is related to subjective norms, which refer to social pressure that affects a person's intention to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). On TikTok, consumers may be encouraged to purchase when they see products being supported, reviewed, or promoted by influencers and online communities.

Previous studies suggest that social interaction and online community engagement can influence purchase intention in social commerce. Akar and Dalgic (2018) stated that consumers' online purchasing decisions are affected by information and opinions shared within social networks. Similarly, Patwa et al. (2025) highlighted that online communities can increase product awareness, relevance, and consumer confidence.

TikTok's algorithm also strengthens social influence by repeatedly exposing users to similar product content based on their interests and engagement. Repeated exposure through influencers, reviews, and viral videos can increase product familiarity and desirability, which may lead to stronger purchase intention (Xie, 2025).

However, conflicting findings in empirical literature highlight that the direct effect of social influence on purchase intention can be non-significant when peer comments are perceived as automated, spammy, or artificially manipulated. The effect of social influence heavily depends on consumer trust. Consumers may still hesitate to buy if they doubt the authenticity of the influencer, product review, or seller. Therefore, consumer trust plays an important role in strengthening the relationship between social influence and purchase intention (Hajli et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Thus, social influence is an important determinant of consumer purchase intention in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing. It influences consumers through peer pressure, online community validation, influencer recommendations, viral trends, and algorithmic content exposure. In this study, social influence is expected to positively affect purchase intention, directly and indirectly through consumer trust.

Mediating Role: Consumer Trust

In the dynamic landscape of algorithm-driven social commerce platforms like TikTok Shop, consumer trust serves as a critical psychological mechanism that bridges environmental stimuli and subsequent consumer behavioral outcomes. Various empirical studies emphasize that external inputs such as the social commerce construct (Sausania, 2024), multi-dimensional social support (Widya & Saputra, 2024), and key ecosystem determinants including trust in the influencer, content quality, perceived value, and social influence do not merely drive transaction results in a simple, direct linear path. Instead, within the fast-paced "shoppertainment" environment of TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, where commercialized short-form video exposures blur the boundary between authentic recommendations and paid endorsements, the efficacy of these environmental and social structures is heavily contingent upon their ability to mitigate the platform's unique "trust deficit" and cultivate user confidence.

Grounded in the Extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), when creators utilize reliable, high-quality, and interactive narrative elements alongside credible brand representations, they successfully foster a strong sense of customer trust, which actively shapes favorable attitudes toward purchasing and significantly accelerates the consumer's purchase intention (Permatasari & Wahyudi, 2024).

Furthermore, consumer trust acts as a vital boundary condition and operational anchor that converts psychological engagement into concrete final transactions. Within digital marketplaces where structural uncertainties and algorithmic persuasion exist, operational parameters like transaction security, adherence to Sharia compliance, and information relevance are found to directly elevate consumer trust levels, which subsequently strengthens a consumer's perceived behavioral control over their resources and dictates final purchasing decisions (Munadia et al., 2024). Because social commerce consumers frequently experience heightened skepticism toward performance-driven affiliate incentives and unverified merchant claims, direct paths from platform attributes or initial content visibility to sales conversion often prove insufficient to bridge the exposure-to-purchase gap. Ultimately, structural equation models across the literature confirm that the indirect pathway mediated by consumer trust is the definitive mechanism that mitigates perceived transaction risks, reduces customer skepticism, and successfully translates initial user interactions into actual transactional commitments (Munadia et al., 2024; Permatasari & Wahyudi, 2024; Sausania, 2024; Widya & Saputra, 2024).

Underpinning Theory

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), introduced by Icek Ajzen, is one of the most influential theories used to explain human behavioral intention and decision-making processes. According to TPB, an individual's intention to perform a behavior is influenced by three main constructs: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The theory has been widely applied in consumer behavior and digital commerce studies because it effectively explains how cognitive and social factors influence purchasing decisions in online environments.

In the viewpoint of TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, TPB provides a suitable theoretical foundation for understanding how consumers develop purchase intentions after being exposed to affiliate-generated content. The first TPB construct, attitude toward the behavior, refers to consumers' positive or negative evaluation of purchasing products promoted through TikTok affiliate links. In this study, attitude is shaped by trust in influencer, content quality, and perceived value. Consumers are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward purchasing when influencers are perceived as credible and authentic, when affiliate content is informative and transparently disclosed, and when the promoted products are perceived to provide good value in terms of price, usefulness, or satisfaction (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Chinedu et al., 2025).

The second construct, subjective norms, refers to perceived social pressure that influences consumer behavior. Within TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, subjective norms are represented by social influence, including peer recommendations, trending products, online reviews, likes, comments, and viral content exposure. TikTok's algorithm-driven environment amplifies social interaction and collective participation, encouraging consumers to conform to popular purchasing trends (Xie, 2026). As a result, consumers may develop stronger purchase intentions when they perceive that significant others or online communities support the purchasing behavior (Akar & Dalgic, 2018).

The third TPB construct, perceived behavioral control (PBC), refers to consumers' perception of their ability to perform a behavior easily and confidently. In TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, PBC is operationally strengthened through consumer trust, which directly reduces transaction uncertainty, perceived financial risk, and platform complexity. Consumers who perceive the purchasing process as secure, transparent, and manageable are more likely to develop stronger intentions to purchase products through affiliate links.

Therefore, TPB provides a comprehensive framework for explaining consumer purchase intention in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing by integrating cognitive evaluation, social influence, and behavioral control factors. By linking trust in influencer, content quality, perceived value, and social influence with TPB constructs and positioning consumer trust as a central mediating mechanism, this study extends the application of TPB into contemporary social commerce environments characterized by algorithm-driven content, performance commission incentives, and influencer-based digital marketing strategies.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Icek Ajzen which explains that behavioral intention is influenced by three key constructs: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. However, to better capture the characteristics of contemporary social commerce, TPB has been extensively validated as a strong predictor of online purchase intention, particularly in environments characterized by uncertainty and information asymmetry (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

In the context of TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, this study extends the TPB framework to better reflect the dynamics of algorithm-driven social commerce (Xie, 2026). Attitude toward purchasing is shaped by trust in influencer, content quality, and perceived value, as these factors directly influence consumers' evaluation of product credibility and desirability (Akar & Nasir, 2015). Recent studies highlight that influencer credibility and content authenticity significantly shape consumer attitudes in short-video commerce environments, particularly where entertainment and persuasion are integrated (Lu et al., 2010). Subjective norms are represented by social influence, where trending content, peer engagement, and community validation through likes, comments, and shares create strong normative pressure on purchase decisions (Cristello et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, perceived behavioral control is strengthened through consumer trust, which reduces perceived risk and increases confidence in completing online transactions. In digital commerce environments, trust has been identified as a key mechanism that mitigates uncertainty and enhances perceived transaction security (Cheng et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2025). In TikTok Shop affiliate marketing, this is particularly critical due to the rapid spread of influencer-generated content and the presence of AI-assisted promotional material, which may heighten consumer skepticism.

By integrating consumer trust into the TPB framework, this study advances the model better to capture behavioral dynamics in modern social commerce ecosystems (Hajli, 2017). As illustrated in Figure 1, purchase intention is not only shaped by rational evaluation and social influence but also by perceived authenticity and credibility of influencers operating within algorithmic systems (Abidin, 2024; Liu & Zhang, 2025; Ahmad et al., 2025).

Therefore, the proposed conceptual framework extends TPB by integrating cognitive evaluation, social interaction, and trust-related dimensions within a unified model of consumer purchase intention. The framework is particularly relevant for explaining purchasing behavior in algorithm-driven social commerce environments, where credibility, content engagement, and platform trust collectively shape consumer decision-making processes.

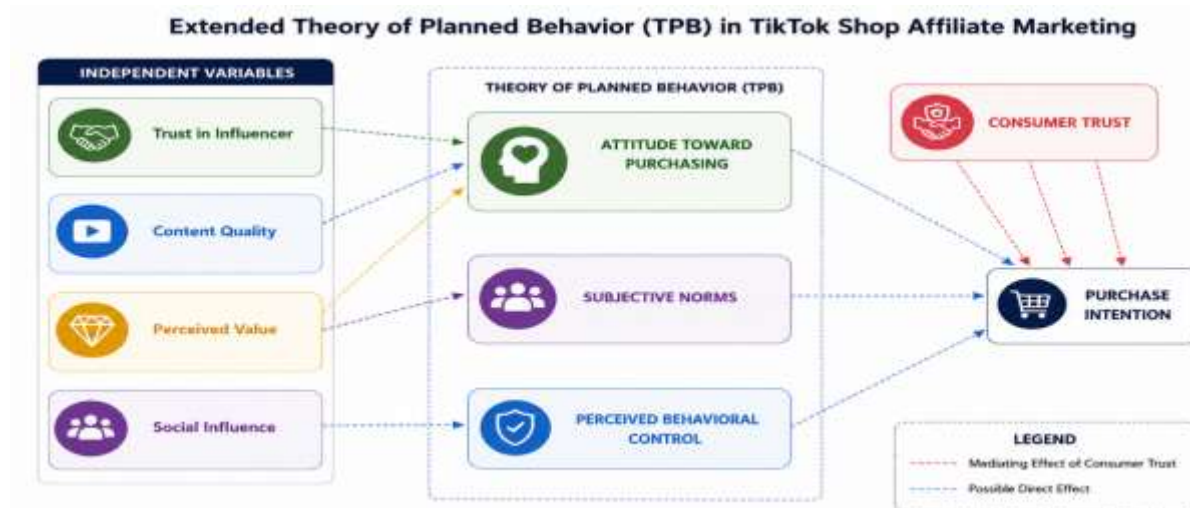


Figure 1: Extended theory of planned behavior (TPB) in TikTok shop affiliate marketing.

Conclusion

The rapid development of social commerce via TikTok Shop affiliate marketing has fundamentally transformed consumer purchasing behavior by blending entertainment with product promotion within algorithm-driven environments. However, a lingering discrepancy exists between high content exposure and actual purchase conversion. Consumer skepticism related to paid endorsements, scripted promotional content and AI-generated influencers leads to “trust deficit” towards TikTok Shop affiliates, which eventually reduce transaction confidence among potential customers. This conceptual study addresses these structural limitations by proposing a trust-centered conceptual framework that outspreads the classical Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) into modern-day social commerce. Through a fusion of social commerce and consumer behavior literature, this paper demonstrates that, rather than only using behavioral engagement to describe consumer decision-making, the interaction of the selected variables in the extended TPB model, which are (1) attitude toward purchasing; (2) subjective norms; and (3) perceived behavioral control provide crucial insights.

According to the TPB model, as for attitude toward purchasing, it is directly shaped by trust in the influencer, content quality, and multidimensional perceived value, which cooperatively dictate how consumers evaluate product credibility and desirability (Akar & Nasir, 2015). Next, subjective norms are driven by social influence, including likes, comments, shares, and viral content exposure which leveraging TikTok's algorithm to create strong normative pressures that encourage trend conformity (Cristello et. al., 2024). Furthermore, perceived behavioral control is strengthened by consumer trust, which serves as a vital mechanism to reduce perceived risk and increase confidence in completing online transactions (Cheng et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2025). In a nutshell, while the algorithmic architecture of TikTok maximizes product exposure, it does not guarantee credibility. Consumer trust acts as the definitive bridging mechanism

required to mitigate uncertainty, overcome information asymmetry, and successfully translate digital engagement into active purchase intentions.

Practical Implications

The findings from this conceptual framework provide valuable strategic guidance for marketers, content creators, and platform operators seeking to improve conversion rates in TikTok Shop affiliate marketing. First, it is advisable for stakeholders to prioritize authenticity of content over mere exposure. Using algorithm to maximize viral reach is no longer sufficient for marketers and brands to market their products or services due to the rise of consumer skepticism related to scripted and AI-generated content. Thus, brands must collaborate with affiliates who are able to maintain genuine expertise, credibility and compassion in order to nurture consumer trust. Second, content creators should enhance multidimensional perceived value by surpassing basic functional product reviews. Affiliates could stimulate customer's purchase intentions by enrich their short-form videos with social, emotional as well as entertainment value, aligning their narratives directly with user interests to lower customer's cognitive demand. Third, digital marketers should leverage structured content quality by designing affiliate guidelines that emphasize informative, visually appealing, and highly interactive content. This is because high-quality information directly boosts consumer attitudes toward purchasing behavior. Fourth, marketers should manage algorithmic social pressures by utilizing community engagement indicators such as viral sounds, trending peer interactions, comments, and shares in order to build strong normative pressures. When consumers see active community validation, their subjective norms are activated which could increase the probability to purchase. Finally, transaction confidence needs to be strengthened. This is because a "trust deficit" regarding security can entirely cancel out high perceived product value, platform features and affiliate disclosures must clearly reassure users about transaction safety, ease of payment, and information reliability, thereby boosting their perceived behavioral control.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the fact that this paper provides a solid theoretical foundation, it features several limitations that creating opportunities for future scholarly inquiry. First, empirical validation is needed in future research. As a conceptual study, the proposed model and its pathways including all direct, indirect, and proposed modifying or mediating paths of consumer trust require meticulous quantitative testing through structural equation modelling (SEM) to statistically validate the hypotheses. Second, the framework focuses on one platform exclusively which is TikTok, as the discussion is for TikTok's short-form videos and "shoppertainment" features. Future research should explore if this model remains applicable to other evolving or traditional social commerce channels as well, that rely on different algorithmic structures. Lastly, future researchers must take into account the evolution of consumer skepticism. Future studies could introduce variables measuring consumer digital literacy or any specific types of skepticism as mediating variables affecting the relationship between exposure and trust among customers, given the rapid growth of digital abnormalities such as "finfluencers phenomenon" and AI-assisted marketing tools.

Acknowledgements

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the participating university for its institutional and administrative support throughout this study. Special thanks are also extended to the academic mentors and peers whose insightful feedback and guidance greatly contributed to the development of this trust-centered conceptual framework.

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