

Trust as a Mediating Variable of the Influence of Social Media Marketing and Content Quality on Purchase Decision (A Study on TikTok Users in Malang City)

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Abstract

This study analyzes the influence of social media marketing and content quality on purchase decisions, with trust positioned as a mediating variable, among TikTok users in Malang City, Indonesia. The rapid growth of TikTok as a short-video-based social media platform has reshaped digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior, making it important to understand how marketing activities and content characteristics affect purchasing decisions. This research employs a quantitative approach using a survey method. Data were collected from 180 active TikTok users who have made purchases influenced by marketing content on the platform. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The findings reveal that social media marketing has a significant positive effect on purchase decisions and trust. Similarly, content quality significantly influences both purchase decisions and consumer trust. However, trust does not have a significant direct effect on purchase decisions and does not mediate the relationship between social media marketing, content quality, and purchase decisions. These results indicate that TikTok users' purchasing behavior is primarily driven by direct marketing exposure and the quality of content rather than by trust-based considerations. This study contributes to the digital marketing literature by providing empirical evidence that challenges the mediating role of trust in short-video social media platforms. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for marketers and business practitioners to focus on developing effective social media marketing strategies and high-quality content to enhance consumer purchase decisions in competitive digital environments.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, social media has become an inseparable part of everyday life and has fundamentally transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers. The rapid advancement of information technology has encouraged organizations to shift from traditional marketing approaches toward digital and social media-based strategies that allow for more interactive, dynamic, and cost-effective engagement. Social media platforms enable businesses to establish direct communication with consumers, disseminate information efficiently, and influence consumer perceptions and behaviors through various forms of digital content (Kotler & Keller, 2016). As a result, social media marketing has emerged as a strategic tool for firms seeking to enhance brand awareness, consumer engagement, and ultimately purchase decisions.

Among the various social media platforms, TikTok has experienced remarkable growth and has become one of the most influential platforms in the digital marketing landscape. TikTok's popularity is driven by its short video format, algorithm-driven content distribution, and high level of user engagement. Unlike other platforms, TikTok allows content to go viral regardless of account size, providing equal opportunities for both large brands and small businesses to reach a broad audience. This unique characteristic makes TikTok particularly attractive for marketing activities that rely on creativity, storytelling, and emotional appeal (Muntinga et al., 2011). In the Indonesian context, social media has become the primary instrument of digital marketing, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises that face limitations in advertising budgets and market reach (Zagoto et al., 2022).

The increasing effectiveness of TikTok as a marketing platform is closely related to changes in consumer media consumption behavior. Consumers today prefer visually engaging and concise content that can be consumed quickly, which aligns with TikTok's short video-based format. Furthermore, TikTok's algorithm is designed to personalize content based on users' interests, interactions, and viewing patterns, enabling businesses to reach highly specific target audiences (P. Wang, 2022). This algorithmic personalization enhances the relevance of marketing messages and increases the likelihood that promotional content will be noticed and engaged with by potential consumers. In addition, TikTok offers various interactive features such as hashtag challenges, live streaming, duet videos, and collaborations with influencers, all of which contribute to higher levels of user participation and engagement.

Previous studies have demonstrated that influencer-based marketing on social media platforms has a significant impact on consumer attitudes and purchase decisions. Lou and Yuan (2019) argue that influencers can effectively shape consumer perceptions through credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction, which foster stronger emotional connections between audiences and promoted products. Similarly, research by Shadrina and Sulistyanto (2022) indicates that content-based marketing on TikTok positively influences purchase decisions among Indonesian consumers, emphasizing the importance of creative and engaging content in stimulating consumer interest. These findings suggest that both social media marketing strategies and content quality play crucial roles in influencing consumer behavior in digital environments.

However, consumer purchase decisions in the digital ecosystem are not solely driven by exposure to promotional messages or engaging content. As online transactions inherently involve uncertainty and perceived risk, consumers often rely on psychological factors, particularly trust, when making

purchasing decisions. Trust serves as a fundamental mechanism that reduces uncertainty, enhances perceived reliability, and increases consumers' willingness to engage in online transactions. In social media marketing contexts, trust can be built through transparent information, credible content, consistent brand communication, and interactive engagement between brands and consumers (Kim & Ko, 2012). Trust is therefore not only a consequence of marketing efforts but also a critical determinant of whether consumers translate their interest into actual purchase decisions.

Content quality plays a significant role in shaping consumer trust in digital marketing environments. High-quality content that is informative, relevant, and authentic can signal professionalism and credibility, thereby enhancing consumers' confidence in the brand. Ashley and Tuten (2015) emphasize that well-designed social media content fosters engagement and strengthens consumer-brand relationships by delivering value beyond mere promotional messages. In line with this perspective, Aryani (2016) highlights that consumer trust in social media-based brands is strongly influenced by the quality of information and the intensity of interaction provided by the brand. These studies indicate that content quality and social media marketing activities may indirectly influence purchase decisions by first shaping consumer trust.

Despite the growing body of literature on social media marketing, content quality, and consumer trust, several limitations remain in existing research. Many prior studies have primarily focused on examining the **direct effects** of social media marketing and content quality on purchase decisions, often treating trust as an independent variable. While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not sufficiently explain the mechanism through which marketing stimuli influence consumer behavior. From a theoretical perspective, trust may function as a psychological process that mediates the relationship between marketing

activities and behavioral outcomes. However, empirical evidence examining trust as an intervening variable, particularly in the context of TikTok-based marketing, remains limited.

Moreover, the majority of previous studies have examined social media marketing phenomena on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, which differ substantially from TikTok in terms of content format, user interaction, and algorithmic content distribution. TikTok's emphasis on entertainment-driven content and algorithm-based visibility creates a distinct marketing environment that may alter the way consumers perceive credibility, trustworthiness, and persuasive messages. Consequently, findings derived from other social media platforms may not be directly applicable to TikTok, highlighting the need for platform-specific investigation. This gap is particularly evident in emerging markets such as Indonesia, where TikTok adoption has grown rapidly and has significantly influenced consumer purchasing behavior.

Addressing this gap is essential for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, examining trust as an intervening variable contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer decision-making processes in social media environments by revealing how marketing efforts are translated into behavioral responses. Practically, understanding the mediating role of trust can help businesses design more effective digital marketing strategies that not only focus on content creation and promotional activities but also prioritize trust-building mechanisms. Without trust, even highly creative and engaging content may fail to convert consumer interest into actual purchases.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing and content quality on purchase decisions, with trust positioned as an intervening variable among TikTok users. By empirically examining the mediating role of trust, this study seeks to fill the existing research gap and extend the digital marketing literature, particularly within

the context of TikTok as an emerging marketing platform. The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions by clarifying the role of trust in social media-driven consumer behavior and practical implications for business practitioners seeking to optimize their marketing strategies in the increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes social media platforms to communicate with customers and promote products or services more broadly and efficiently (Kotler & Keller, 2016). With the increasing number of social media users, this strategy has become increasingly important in reaching target markets at a lower cost compared to traditional marketing (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

In addition to being a promotional tool, social media marketing also plays a role in building brand image and credibility. Attractive and relevant content can increase customer engagement and encourage loyalty to a brand. One of the main advantages of this digital marketing approach is the two-way communication between companies and customers, which enables more responsive and personal interaction (Wardani, 2023).

Previous research shows that social media marketing has a significant impact on consumer trust and purchasing decisions (Mihartinah et al., 2023; Zed et al., 2025). Consumers tend to trust reviews and recommendations from fellow users more than corporate advertisements. Furthermore, transparency of information and good interaction from the company can strengthen trust and increase customer satisfaction (Mahfudnurnajamuddin et al., 2025; Yuana & Sutarso, 2021).

The effectiveness of social media marketing also depends on content strategy. Engaging and interactive content, such as short videos, polls, or live broadcasts, can increase

customer engagement and the appeal of a brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019; P. Wang, 2022). Therefore, companies need to develop innovative social media marketing strategies that align with consumer preferences to compete in an increasingly competitive digital era (Zagoto et al., 2022).

The indicators that can be used to measure the success of social media marketing according to Safko & Brake (2009) Are:

- a. Social presence
- b. Brand credibility
- c. Customer engagement
- d. Customer participation
- e. Virality effect

2.2 Content Quality

Content quality refers to the level of effectiveness of the information delivered through social media in attracting attention, maintaining relevance, and building consumer trust in a brand or product (Lee & Hong, 2016a). High-quality content is usually characterized by informative aspects, attractive aesthetics, and high user engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Accurate, clear, and useful information can increase consumer interest and strengthen positive perceptions of the promoted brand (Kwan & Device, 2023).

In addition, quality content can increase user engagement, whether in the form of comments, sharing, or other positive reactions to the presented information (Erkan & Evans, 2018). The more interactive the content, the greater the opportunity to reach a wider audience through social media algorithms that prioritize high-engagement (H. Wang et al., 2020). Consistency in presenting interesting and relevant content is also an important factor in building long-term relationships with customers. Consistency in delivering messages that suit audience needs and preferences can strengthen customer loyalty and increase the potential for conversion into purchases (Liwang, 2022).

Apart from aesthetic and relevance aspects, trust is also a crucial element in

determining the quality of content. Consumers tend to trust content that provides transparent information, is supported by valid data, and receives positive responses from other users (Erkan & Evans, 2018). Therefore, social media-based marketing strategies need to consider the creation of content that is not only attractive but also highly credible to build a positive brand image and increase competitiveness in the digital market (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Previous research shows that content quality has a significant influence on user engagement and purchasing decisions (Blessa & Inriani, 2022). Content that is engaging and aligned with audience preferences can increase interaction and build customer loyalty. Moreover, high-quality content can strengthen customer trust in a brand, which ultimately impacts purchase decisions (Kim & Ko, 2012). Other studies show that consumers are more likely to trust transparent content, supported by valid data, and has positive responses from other users (Erkan & Evans, 2018). Indicators that can be used to measure content quality according to Lee & Hong (2016) Are:

- a. Message clarity
- b. Source credibility
- c. Content relevance.

2.3 Trust

Consumer trust is a fundamental factor in building long-term relationships between customers and a brand or product. According to Gefen et al. (2003), trust is defined as the customer's belief in the reliability, credibility, and integrity of a brand or product in fulfilling their expectations and needs. High trust encourages consumers to feel safer in conducting transactions, thereby increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases and product recommendations to others.

In the context of digital marketing, consumer trust plays an important role as an intervening variable that strengthens the relationship between digital marketing strategies, such as social media marketing and content quality, with purchase decisions. Trust

can be formed through various factors, such as information transparency, positive testimonials from other customers, and responsive and professional interactions with the seller. When consumers have high trust in a brand, they are more easily influenced by digital marketing content, thereby increasing their tendency to make purchases.

Previous research shows that consumer trust plays an important role as an intervening variable in digital marketing. Mulyani & Sigit (2017) Revealed that digital marketing and product quality influence purchase intention, with brand trust as mediation, especially in TikTok live streaming. Rizfie (2023) Also found that digital marketing, personal selling, and word of mouth affect consumer loyalty through trust. In addition, Adryan et al. (2024) Examined influencer marketing and found that customer engagement and brand image strengthen purchase intention. These findings affirm that trust is a key factor in the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. According to Mayer et al. (1995), the indicators of trust include:

- a. Integrity
- b. Benevolence
- c. Competence

2.4 Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is an important stage in consumer behavior that involves various considerations before finally choosing to buy a product or service. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), purchase decisions are influenced by a combination of internal and external factors that shape consumer perceptions and preferences toward a brand or product. Internal factors include individual needs, motivation, previous experience, and attitudes toward the brand, while external factors include social influences, market trends, and marketing strategies implemented by the company. A study by Aryani (2016), shows that the emotional and rational factors of consumers play an important role in shaping purchase decisions, especially in the context of digital marketing.

In the digital era, digital marketing and content quality have become increasingly dominant factors in influencing purchase decisions. Digital marketing allows companies to reach consumers more broadly and interactively through various social media platforms, e-commerce, and data-driven marketing strategies (Adryan et al., 2024). The success of digital marketing strategies depends on the company's ability to present attractive, informative, and relevant content for its target audience. Quality content not only increases product appeal but also strengthens consumer trust in the brand (Shadrina & Sulistyanto, 2022).

Consumer trust is a key element in the decision-making process, especially in online transactions that involve higher risks compared to direct purchases. Factors such as interaction and customer engagement through comments, reviews, and quick responses from sellers can also strengthen consumer confidence in making purchase decisions (Nurmanah & Nugroho, 2021). In addition, consumers tend to be more confident in buying a product if the information provided is clear, transparent, and supported by reviews or positive testimonials from other users (Fathullah et al., 2023).

With increasing competition in the digital market, companies need to optimize digital marketing strategies and improve content quality to attract attention and build customer loyalty. The implementation of personalized marketing strategies, such as product recommendations based on user preferences, can also increase the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and accelerate the consumer decision-making process. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of digital marketing and content quality becomes a crucial aspect in encouraging positive purchase decisions. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), purchase decisions can be measured through:

- a. Need recognition
- b. Information search
- c. Alternative evaluation
- d. Purchase decision

e. Post-purchase behavior

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a survey method to empirically examine the relationships among social media marketing, content quality, trust, and purchase decision within the context of TikTok users. Quantitative research is appropriate for testing theoretical models and hypotheses through objective measurement and statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2018). The proposed research model positions trust as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing, content quality, and purchase decision.

The study employs a cross-sectional design, in which data were collected at a single point in time to capture respondents' perceptions and behavioral responses toward marketing content on TikTok.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of TikTok users in Malang City who have made purchasing decisions influenced by marketing content on the TikTok platform. Malang City was selected as the research location due to its high internet penetration, strong adoption of social media platforms, and the dominance of young, digitally active consumers who frequently engage in TikTok-based content consumption.

The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling, which allows the selection of respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2018). The inclusion criteria applied in this study are as follows:

1. Respondents are active TikTok users.
2. Respondents have viewed marketing or promotional content on TikTok.
3. Respondents have made at least one purchase decision influenced by TikTok content.
4. Respondents reside in Malang City.

A total of 180 valid responses were collected and used for data analysis. This sample size is considered adequate for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is suitable for predictive analysis and complex research models with relatively small to medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2014).

3.3 Data Collection Technique

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online to ensure accessibility and efficiency. The questionnaire was designed to measure respondents' perceptions of social media marketing activities, content quality, trust, and purchase decisions related to TikTok-based marketing.

All measurement items were adapted from established and validated scales in previous studies to ensure content validity. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), which is commonly used in behavioral and marketing research to capture attitudinal responses.

3.4 Measurement of Variables

The constructs in this study were operationalized as follows:

1. Social Media Marketing was measured using indicators adapted from Saffo and Brake (2009), including social presence, brand credibility, customer engagement, customer participation, and virality effect.
2. Content Quality was measured based on indicators proposed by Lee and Hong (2016), including message clarity, source credibility, and content relevance.
3. Trust was measured using the dimensions of integrity, benevolence, and competence, as suggested by Mayer et al. (1995).
4. Purchase Decision was measured based on the stages of consumer decision-making proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016), including need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, implemented through SmartPLS version 3.2.9. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for exploratory and predictive research, does not require strict normality assumptions, and performs well with complex models and moderate sample sizes (Hair et al., 2014).

The analysis procedure followed two main stages:

1. Measurement Model (Outer Model) Evaluation, which assessed:
 - Convergent validity through outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE),
 - Discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion,
 - Construct reliability through Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and rho_A.
2. Structural Model (Inner Model) Evaluation, which examined:
 - Path coefficients and their significance using bootstrapping,
 - Coefficient of determination (R^2 and Adjusted R^2),
 - Effect size (f^2),
 - Collinearity assessment using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF),
 - Model fit indices including SRMR, NFI, and RMS_theta.

Hypothesis testing was conducted based on t-statistics and p-values, where a relationship is considered statistically significant if the t-value exceeds 1.96 and the p-

value is less than 0.05 at a 5% significance level.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research. All responses were collected anonymously and used solely for academic purposes, ensuring confidentiality and ethical compliance throughout the research process.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Outer Model

This research was tested using Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the SmartPLS 3.2.9 application. PLS analysis consists of two sub-models: the first is the measurement model, often referred to as the outer model, and the second is the structural model, often referred to as the inner model.

4.1.1 Validity

Convergent validity is an indicator that measures the level of correlation between constructs and latent variables in evaluating convergent validity through the examination of individual item reliability. It can be seen from the standardized loading factor, which illustrates the magnitude of the correlation between each measurement item (indicator) and its construct. The expected value is > 0.7 , but outer loading values between 0.5 – 0.6 are already considered sufficient to meet the requirements for convergent validity (Ghozali & Hengky, 2014).

Table 1. Loading Faktor

	Social Media Marketing (X1)	Content Quality (X2)	Purchase Decision (Y)	Trust (Z)
X1.1	0.719			
X1.2	0.689			
X1.3	0.657			
X1.4	0.779			
X1.5	0.763			
X1.6	0.719			
X1.7	0.696			
X1.8	0.734			
X1.9	0.805			
X1.10	0.705			
X2.1		0.852		
X2.2		0.814		
X2.3		0.821		
X2.4		0.759		
X2.5		0.802		
X2.6		0.613		
Y.1			0.796	
Y.2			0.707	
Y.3			0.718	
Y.4			0.665	
Y.5			0.723	
Y.6			0.710	
Y.7			0.811	
Y.8			0.793	
Y.9			0.685	
Y.10			0.763	
Z.1				0.840
Z.2				0.796
Z.3				0.800
Z.4				0.677
Z.5				0.789
Z.6				0.746

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

The results of the Convergent Validity test for the loading factor can be seen in Table 1 above, which shows that all indicators of the variables used in this study—social media marketing, content quality, trust, and purchase decision—have a loading factor value > 0.5.

This means that each indicator is valid as it has a high correlation. In addition, the next test is discriminant validity, which can be evaluated through the square root value of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), obtained from the Fornell-Larcker analysis results in Table 2.

Table 2. Fornell lacker

Fornell Lacker	1	2	3	4
Social Media Marketing	0.728			
Content Quality	0.862	0.781		
Purchase Decision	0.858	0.828	0.734	
Trust	0.791	0.783	0.734	0.776

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025

A construct is said to have adequate discriminant validity if the square root value of the AVE of the construct is higher than the correlation value between other latent constructs. Based on Table 3, it is known that the variables of social media marketing,

content quality, trust, and purchase decision have square root AVE values that are higher than their correlations with other constructs. Therefore, these four variables meet the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social Media Marketing	0.530
Content Quality	0.610
Purchase Decision	0.538
Trust	0.603

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

4.1.2 Reliability

This study uses the indicators of Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to measure the reliability and validity of the construct. In the evaluation of construct reliability and validity, an instrument is declared reliable if the values of Composite Reliability and rho_A exceed 0.7, and the value

of Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.6. Meanwhile, construct validity is considered fulfilled if the AVE value is greater than 0.5. Based on the results presented in Table 4, all measurement items have met the criteria for reliability and validity, thus it can be concluded that the instrument used is considered reliable and valid.

Table 4. Composite Reliability dan Crunbach's Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social Media Marketing	0.901	0.902	0.918	0.530
Content Quality	0.869	0.876	0.903	0.610
Purchase Decision	0.904	0.910	0.921	0.538
Trust	0.867	0.867	0.901	0.603

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

In this test, to determine the presence or absence of collinearity symptoms among constructs in the structural model, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) indicator is used in the Inner Model. The VIF value in the Inner Model

must be below 5, as a value above 5 indicates the presence of collinearity among constructs. Based on the results presented in Table 5, all VIF values are recorded below 5, thus it can be

concluded that the model does not experience multicollinearity issues.

Table 5. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Inner Model

Variable	1	2	3	4
Social Media Marketing		2,742	4.503	3.889
Content Quality				
Purchase Decision				
Trust			2.992	

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

4.2 Inner Model

In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, the path coefficient value refers to the direct effects. The measurement of path coefficients between constructs is conducted to assess the significance and strength of the relationships among variables, as well as to serve as the basis for hypothesis testing. The path coefficient values range from -1 to +1. The closer the value is to +1, the stronger and more positive the relationship between constructs. Conversely, values closer to -1 indicate a negative relationship.

Based on the results presented in Table 6, it is known that the direct effect of variable

X1 on Y is 0.535, which indicates that every one-unit increase in X1 will increase Y by 53.5%. This effect is positive. Furthermore, the direct effect of X2 on Y is recorded at 0.319, indicating that a one-unit increase in X2 has the potential to increase Y by 31.9%, also showing a positive relationship.

In addition, the direct effect of X1 on Z is 0.453, indicating that every one-unit increase in X1 will increase Z by 45.3%, while the direct effect of X2 on Z is 0.392, meaning that a one-unit increase in X2 will increase Z by 39.2%. Both effects indicate a positive relationship. Lastly, the direct effect of Z on Y is 0.060, suggesting that a one-unit increase in Z will increase Y by 6.0%, which is also positive.

Table 6. Path Coefficient

Variable	X1	X2	Y	Z
Social Media Marketing (X1)			0.535	0.453
Content Quality (X2)			0.319	0.392
Purchase Decision (Y)				
Trust (Z)			0.060	

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

Based on the data in Table 7 from the indirect effects analysis, it is known that the indirect effect of variable X1 on Y through variable Z is 0.027. This indicates that every one-unit increase in X1 can indirectly increase Y through Z by 2.7%, with a positive

relationship direction. Furthermore, the indirect effect of X2 on Y through Z is recorded at 0.024, which means that a one-unit increase in X2 has the potential to indirectly increase Y through Z by 2.4%, also indicating a positive effect.

Tabel 7. Indirect Effects

Variabel	X1	X2	Y	Z
Social Media Marketing (X1)			0.027	
Content Quality (X2)			0.024	
Purchase Decision (Y)				
Trust (Z)				

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

The structural model (inner model) testing serves to determine the relationships between constructs, the R-Square values, and the significance levels of the research model. The feasibility test of the model is measured using the R-Square of each independent latent variable toward the dependent variable.

In this study, the Adjusted R-Square value is used to explain the extent to which exogenous latent variables influence endogenous latent variables. Based on Table 8, it is known that the Purchase Decision variable has an Adjusted R-Square value of 0.764, or equivalent to 76.4%. This value indicates that

the Trust variable contributes to the influence of Social Media Marketing and Content Quality on Purchase Decisions by 76.4%, while the remaining 23.6% is explained by other variables not included in this research model.

Meanwhile, the Trust variable obtained an Adjusted R-Square value of 0.622 or 62.2%. This indicates that the Social Media Marketing and Content Quality variables together contribute to the formation of the Trust variable by 62.2%, and the remaining 37.8% is influenced by other factors not explained in this study.

Table 8. R Square

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.768	0.764
Trust (Z)	0.666	0.662

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

In addition, the F-Square is used to measure the magnitude of the influence of a latent variable on another variable within the structural model. An F-Square value of 0.02 indicates a small effect, a value of 0.15 indicates a moderate effect and a value of 0.35 or more reflects a large effect.

Based on the results listed in Table 9, the F-Square value of the Social Media Marketing variable on Purchase Decision is 0.274, which falls into the category of a large effect.

Meanwhile, the F-Square value of Content Quality on Purchase Decision is 0.101, which is categorized as a small effect. Furthermore, the influence of Social Media Marketing on Trust shows an F-Square value of 0.158, which falls into the moderate effect category, while Content Quality on Trust has a value of 0.118, categorized as a small effect. On the other hand, the influence of Trust on Purchase Decision has an F-Square value of 0.005, indicating a very small effect.

Tabel 9. F Square

Variabel	X1	X2	Y	Z
Social Media Marketing (X1)			0.274	0.158
Content Quality (X2)			0.101	0.118
Purchase Decision (Y)				
Trust (Z)			0.005	

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

Next, a model fit or model suitability test was conducted. In this study, the model fit test was carried out using several statistical indicators, namely the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and RMS_theta. To indicate that the model has a good fit, these indicators must

meet certain criteria: SRMR < 0.08; NFI > 0.90; and RMS_theta close to zero.

Based on the results presented in Table 10, the SRMR value is 0.075, which meets the requirement as it is below 0.08. Meanwhile, the NFI value is 0.729, which is still below the threshold of 0.900. The RMS_theta value is

0.130, which is close to zero. Based on these three indicators, it can be concluded that the resulting model has generally met the fit

criteria, making it suitable for use and capable of adequately representing the relationships among variables.

Table 10. Model Fit

	Saturated Model
SUMMER	0.075
d ULS	2.944
d_G	1.255
Chi-Square	1141.006
NFI	0.729
Rms Theta	0.130

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

4.3 Hipotesis Testing

Based on the data processing that has been conducted, the results can be used to answer the hypotheses in this study. Hypothesis testing in this research was carried out by examining the t-statistics value and the p-value. The effect between variables is considered significant if the t-value is greater than 1.96 (t-table at 5% significance level).

A hypothesis is considered accepted if the p-value is less than 0.05. The basis for direct hypothesis testing is the output or values found in the path coefficients and indirect effect outputs. Meanwhile, structural model testing is used to explain the relationships among the research variables.

Direct Hypothesis Testing

Table 11. Path Coefficients

	Original Smapel (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistic (O/STDEV)	P Value
Social Media Marketing (X1)-> Purchase Decision (Y)	0.535	0.513	0.108	4.942	0.000
Social Media Marketing (X1) -> Trust (Z)	0.453	0.458	0.107	4.223	0.000
Content Quality (X2) -> Purchase Decision (Y)	0.319	0.302	0.079	4.028	0.000
Content Quality (X2) -> Trust	0.392	0.394	0.086	4.533	0.000
Trust (Z) -> Purchase Decision (Y)	0.060	0.101	0.127	0.477	0.634

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

Based on Table 10 above, the results of the direct testing between variables are as follows:

1. Social Media Marketing has a T-statistic value of $4.942 > 1.96$, indicating that Social

Media Marketing has a significant effect on Purchase Decisions.

2. Social Media Marketing has a T-statistic value of $4.223 > 1.96$, indicating that Social

Media Marketing has a significant effect on Trust.

3. Content Quality has a T-statistic value of $4.028 > 1.96$, indicating that Content Quality has a significant effect on Purchase Decisions.

4. Content Quality has a T-statistic value of $4.533 > 1.96$, indicating that Content Quality has a significant effect on Trust.

5. Trust has a T-statistic value of $0.477 < 1.96$, indicating that Trust does not have a direct significant effect on Purchase Decision.

Indirect Hypothesis Testing

Table 11. Specific indirect effect

	Original Smapel (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistic (O/STDEV)	P Value
Social Media Marketing (X1) -> Trust (Z) -> Purchase Decision (Y)	0.027	0.053	0.067	0.406	0.685
Content Quality (X2)-> Trust (Z) -> Purchase Decision (Y)	0.024	0.038	0.049	0.488	0.626

Source: SmartPLS Output, processed primary data, 2025.

Based on Table 11 above, the results of the indirect testing between variables are as follows:

1. For the Social Media Marketing variable, there is no mediating effect of Trust on Customer Decision. This can be seen from the test results showing a statistical value of $0.406 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.685 > 0.05$.
2. For the Content Quality variable, there is no mediating effect of Trust on Customer Decision. This is shown by the test results with a statistical value of $0.488 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.488 > 0.05$.

4.4 Research Discussion

4.4.1 The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decision

Based on the path analysis results, the direct influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decision is indicated by the coefficient value, with a t-statistic of 4.942 and a p-value of 0.000, making the effect significant. This shows that the more intense and strategic the social media marketing activities, the higher the consumers' purchase decision. Effective Social Media Marketing increases awareness and creates a stimulus that influences purchase intention. These findings align with previous studies conducted by Lova & Raharjo (2023); Sumarto & Anggarawati

(2024), which demonstrated that social media marketing has a significant positive effect on purchase decisions.

4.4.2 The Influence of Content Quality on Purchase Decision

The direct influence of Content Quality on Purchase Decision is significantly positive, as shown by the t-statistic of 4.223 and p-value of 0.000. This means that the better the quality of the content provided by the company, the higher the likelihood that consumers will decide to make a purchase. This supports the importance of developing informative, engaging, and relevant content to boost conversion. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Kirana et al. (2025), which found that content quality positively affects purchase decisions.

4.4.3 The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Trust

The direct influence of Social Media Marketing on Trust, with a t-statistic of 4.028 and p-value of 0.000, shows a strong and significant effect. The more active and consistent a brand is in utilizing social media for communication, the higher the consumer's trust in the brand. This confirms that social media marketing activities are not only

promotional but also serve to build relationships and credibility. These findings are consistent with those of Harjanti et al. (2022), who also found that social media marketing affects trust.

4.4.4 The Influence of Content Quality on Trust

The influence of Content Quality on Trust, with a t-statistic of 4.533 and a p-value of 0.000, indicates a significant positive effect. Consumers tend to trust brands that deliver information, relevantly, and aesthetically. This proves that content quality is a crucial foundation for building trust in the digital era. This research supports the findings of Ramdhani et al. (2024), which showed that high-quality video content has a significant positive effect on consumer trust.

4.4.5 The Influence of Trust on Purchase Decision

Trust has a direct influence on Purchase Decisions with a t-statistic of 0.477 and a p-value of 0.000. This shows that trust is one of the important factors influencing purchasing decisions. Consumers who trust a brand tend to have greater confidence in making purchases. These findings are in line with the research by Aulia & Hafsanudin (2021), which revealed that trust has a significant positive influence on purchase decisions.

4.4.6 The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decision Through Trust as a Mediating Variable

Social Media Marketing does not have a significant indirect effect on Purchase Decisions through Trust as a mediating variable, as indicated by a t-statistic of 0.406 and a p-value of 0.685. In other words, even if social media marketing is implemented, without a strong increase in trust, it is not sufficient to influence consumer purchasing decisions. These results do not align with the findings of Oktaviani et al. (2022), who found that trust can mediate the effect of digital marketing on purchase decisions.

4.4.7 The Influence of Content Quality on Purchase Decision Through Trust as a Mediating Variable

Content Quality does not have a significant indirect effect on Purchase Decision through Trust, with a t-statistic of 0.488 and a p-value of 0.626. This means that even though the presented content is of high quality if it fails to build strong trust, it is not enough to drive consumers to make a purchase decision. These findings differ from the research conducted by Ramdhani et al. (2024), which showed that the quality of video content in purchase decisions can be mediated by trust.

5. Closing

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigates the effects of social media marketing and content quality on purchase decisions, with trust positioned as a mediating variable, within the context of the TikTok platform. The empirical findings demonstrate that both social media marketing and content quality exert a significant and positive direct influence on purchase decisions. In addition, these two variables also significantly enhance consumer trust. However, trust does not have a significant direct effect on purchase decisions and fails to mediate the relationship between social media marketing, content quality, and purchase decisions.

These findings suggest that in the TikTok-based digital marketing environment, consumers' purchasing behavior is driven more strongly by direct exposure to marketing activities and content appeal rather than by trust-based considerations. The short-form, fast-paced, and entertainment-oriented nature of TikTok may encourage more spontaneous and impulsive purchasing decisions, thereby reducing the mediating role traditionally played by trust in digital commerce models.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the digital marketing and consumer behavior literature by providing

empirical evidence that challenges the dominant assumption of trust as a central mediating variable in online purchase decision models. While previous studies often emphasize trust as a crucial determinant of online purchasing behavior, the findings of this research indicate that its role may vary depending on platform characteristics and content consumption patterns.

Specifically, this study extends social media marketing theory by highlighting that platform-specific dynamics—such as algorithm-driven content exposure and high user engagement—can alter established behavioral mechanisms. Thus, the study enriches existing theoretical frameworks by demonstrating that the influence of trust is not universal but context-dependent, particularly in social commerce environments driven by short video content.

5.3 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study offer important practical implications for business practitioners and digital marketers who utilize TikTok as a marketing platform. Since social media marketing and content quality directly influence purchase decisions, firms should prioritize the development of creative, engaging, and relevant content that aligns with audience preferences. Marketing strategies should focus on visual storytelling, entertainment value, and clear product presentation to stimulate immediate consumer responses.

Moreover, although trust does not function as a mediating variable in this study, it remains important for long-term brand sustainability. Therefore, businesses are encouraged to view trust as a supporting factor for brand credibility rather than as the primary driver of short-term purchase decisions. Integrating interactive features such as live streaming, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content may further strengthen consumer engagement and purchasing outcomes.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research sample was limited to TikTok users in a single city, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Second, the use of a cross-sectional survey design limits the ability to capture changes in consumer trust and behavior over time. Third, this study focuses solely on trust as a mediating variable, while other psychological or situational factors may also play significant roles.

Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better understand causal relationships and behavioral dynamics. Additionally, comparative studies across different social media platforms could provide deeper insights into platform-specific marketing effects. Incorporating alternative mediating or moderating variables—such as impulse buying tendency, influencer credibility, perceived entertainment, or perceived risk—may also help refine and expand the current research model.

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