

# Effect of TikTok live streamer characteristics on purchase intentions: the mediating role of trust

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## ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of live-streaming commerce through the TikTok platform has become an increasingly popular digital marketing strategy because it is able to present direct interaction between streamers and audiences. This study seeks to investigate the impact of TikTok live streamer attributes (credibility, interactivity, and beauty) on purchase intentions, with trust serving as a mediating variable, utilizing the S-O-R model as the theoretical framework. Data were gathered via a survey of 203 participants who had experience watching TikTok Live with commercial content using the purposive sampling method. The PLS-SEM method was employed for data analysis. The results showed that the credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness of live streamers positively affect consumer trust. In addition, consumer trust positively affects purchase intentions. Furthermore, trust modulates the impact of streamer characteristics (credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness) on purchase intentions. The outcomes of this study provide significant implications for marketers in building sales strategies on the TikTok platform.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of digital technology has resulted in profound changes in marketing approaches, particularly through the utilization of social media platforms such as TikTok (Razafinandrasana & Tamara, 2024). One of the increasingly popular features is TikTok Live, which allows direct interaction between streamers and audiences in real time (Zhang & Liu, 2024). This format not only provides a more immersive experience for users but also opens up new opportunities in product promotion and sales activities (Wang, 2024). In this context, live streamers act as the main communicators who not only convey information but also build relationships and influence consumer purchasing decisions through a more personal and dynamic approach (Zheng et al., 2023).

The characteristics of live streamers are important aspects in shaping audience perceptions and responses (Chen & Wu, 2024). Three main dimensions that are often highlighted in digital marketing literature are credibility (Men et al., 2024), interactivity (Meng & Lin, 2023), and attractiveness (Zheng et al., 2023). Credibility includes consumers' perceptions that live streamers are trustworthy and reliable (Ng et al., 2024), while interactivity refers to the ability to respond to audience questions or comments directly and create active two-way communication (Liu & Zhang, 2024). On the other hand, attractiveness includes visual aspects, communication style, and a pleasant personality (Kim, 2023). These three characteristics are believed to have a strong influence

on the formation of consumer trust and ultimately drive purchase intentions (Ji, 2024). It has been reported by existing studies that credibility (Xu et al., 2022), interactivity (LI et al., 2024), and attractiveness (Chew et al., 2024) are crucial in forming positive perceptions and purchase intentions.

Credibility is a characteristic or advantageous feature of the broadcaster that can influence the recipient's agreement with the message (Dokumaci, 2024). In terms of live streaming marketing, the credibility of the message deliverer is one of the main determinants in forming consumer trust in the product or brand being promoted (Zhang & Prebensen, 2025). The credibility of the live streamer, which reflects the positive characteristics of the streamer that cause customers to accept the truth of their messages, has a significant impact on consumer views of the credibility and integrity of the information presented (Luo et al., 2025). Previous research has shown that credible message sources tend to be more persuasive and are able to create stronger psychological bonds with the audience, thereby increasing the likelihood of consumer trust being formed (Hsu & Hu, 2024). In the context of live commerce, the presence of a credible live streamer may reduce risk perceptions, strengthen the validity of promotional messages, and increase consumer confidence in purchasing decisions (Luo et al., 2024; Men et al., 2024).

In addition, interactivity is defined as the degree of responsiveness and real-time engagement in which people can actively control and share information with one another (Zheng et al., 2023). Interactivity in live streaming is a key element that distinguishes live commerce from other forms of digital marketing, as it allows for real-time two-way communication between the live streamer and the audience (Tedjakusuma et al., 2025). High levels of interactivity can create a more immersive experience and strengthen the perception of authenticity and openness of the message deliverer (Lin et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Previous research has demonstrated that interactivity improves customers' perceptions of control and involvement, which can raise trust in the source of information (Chang et al., 2023; Cheng et al., 2025). In the context of live streaming commerce, when live streamers demonstrate high levels of interactivity, consumers tend to feel more valued and important, thus forming stronger trust in both the presenter and the product offered (Tian et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the concept of live streamer attractiveness encompasses audience perceptions of the streamer's outward physical features as well as their individual personality attributes (Chang et al., 2023). In digital marketing communications, the attractiveness of the source is acknowledged as a crucial determinant in shaping the efficacy of message transmission and the development of consumer attitudes (Dokumaci, 2024). Live streamer attractiveness, which includes physical aspects, communication style, and pleasant personality, can increase positive perceptions of the message deliverer, which in turn has an impact on increasing consumer trust in the information conveyed (He et al., 2022). In the live streaming business, visually and socially appealing live streamers can give a more good impression, strengthen the perception of authenticity, and increase audience attention and engagement (Gao et al., 2025). This condition can reduce resistance to promotional messages and increase the possibility of forming trust in the promoted product or brand (Ding et al., 2025). Existing studies have revealed that live streamer attractiveness is an important determinant of consumer trust (Xiao et al., 2025; Zou & Fu, 2024).

Although previous literature has discussed the effect of communicator characteristics on purchasing behavior, a gap exists in the present body of research regarding the concurrent impact of these three characteristics on purchase intention, with consumer trust serving as a mediating variable, particularly in the setting of TikTok live streaming. Most previous research only look at the direct influence of live streamer characteristics on purchase intention, without explaining how trust as an affective and cognitive response is formed from perceptions of streamer characteristics and then drives behavioral responses (Lin et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2022).

Addressing this gap, this research endeavors to explore the roles of live streamer characteristics on TikTok, specifically focusing on credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness in determining purchase intention by considering consumer trust as a mediator. In the context of real-time digital interactions and minimal direct experience with products, trust becomes a crucial factor that bridges external stimuli and consumer purchase intention (Wu & Huang, 2023). Furthermore, Jiang et al. (2024) stated that trust creates a sense of security, reduces risk perception, and increases comfort in assessing information conveyed by streamers. Trust is the consumer's anticipation that the seller will fulfil their commitment to the consumer (Yang et al., 2024). Consumer trust is significant psychological construct in explaining how perceptions of the characteristics of the messenger can influence consumer behavior in a digital context (Zou & Fu, 2024). In a live-streaming commerce

environment characterized by limited physical interaction and increased information risk, the trust serves as a cognitive mechanism that helps consumers evaluate the validity and integrity of the information conveyed by the live streamer (Ni & Ueichi, 2024). Previous studies have shown that when consumers trust the messenger, they tend to have more positive evaluations of the promoted product or brand, as well as show higher levels of purchase intention (Chang et al., 2023; Ding et al., 2025). Therefore, trust is not only the result of initial perceptions of the message source but also serves as an intermediary variable that directs these influences toward consumer attitudes and behavior. Several research have indicated that trust has a substantial mediating influence in different consumer behaviour models, especially in the context of the relationship between external factors and affective and conative responses (Fu et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2024).

To understand the psychological process more comprehensively, Accordingly, the theoretical framework Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) serves as the analytical underpinning for this investigation. This model is used because it is able to explain the flow of influence from external stimuli (stimulus) in this case, the characteristics of live streamers, which trigger internal conditions of consumers (organisms) such as trust, and ultimately produce behavioral responses (responses) in the form of purchase intentions (Tan et al., 2024). By placing trust as a mediating variable, as a theoretical foundation, the S-O-R model effectively facilitates the exploration of how interpersonal communication elements in live streaming influence consumer behavior within the digital landscape. The core of the model posits those external stimuli (S) act as catalysts, triggering internal cognitive and emotional states within the individual (O). These internal processes then lead to specific behavioral outcomes (R), illustrating the dynamic relationship between the external environment and individual responses (Liu et al., 2022). Within the context of the S-O-R model, the 'stimuli' refer to the external factors that initiate an individual's cognitive and emotional reactions (Dokumacı, 2024). The 'organism' component, in contrast, encompasses the internal psychological and emotional states that mediate how these external stimuli are processed and translated into behavioral responses (Tang et al., 2023). Finally, the response signifies the observable behavioral outcomes that emerge as a result of the interaction between the stimuli and the organismic states (Amarullah et al., 2022). In the current study, the characteristics of TikTok live streamers, namely credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness, serve as the stimuli (S). The internal psychological construct of consumer trust functions as the organism (O), while purchase intention is the response (R). This conceptual framework of the study is illustrated in Figure 1.

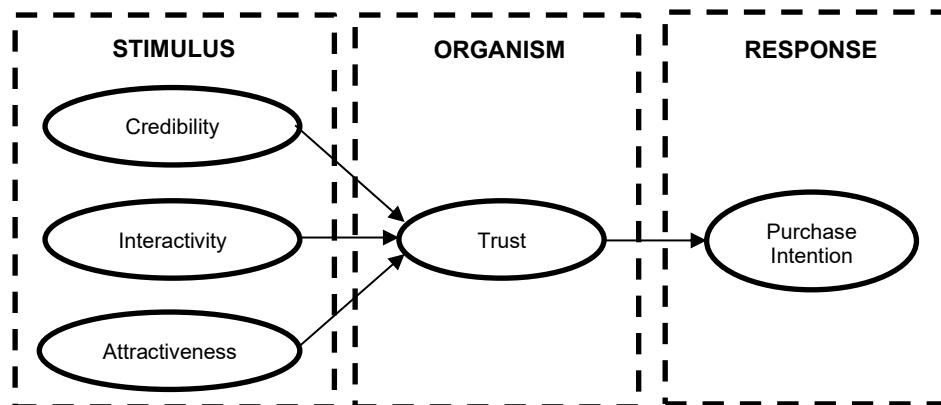


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a quantitative methodology and a survey method to assess the influence of TikTok live streamer characteristics, including credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness, on consumer purchase intentions. Data collection was conducted using the chosen survey method because it allows researchers to collect data on a large scale. Data were collected through online questionnaires distributed to respondents who had viewed live streaming on the TikTok platform in the context of product promotion. The measurement instrument was prepared based on adaptations of scales that have been validated in previous studies, such as Men et al. (2024) to measure credibility, Meng and Lin (2023) for interactivity, Zheng et al. (2023) for attractiveness, Ma et al. (2022) for trust, and Liu and Zhang (2024) for purchase intentions. A 5-point Likert scale, from

"strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," is used to score each component. The sample strategy utilised a purposive sampling method with the primary criterion being that respondents were at least 17 years old, actively used TikTok, and had experience watching live streaming of product sales. The number of samples was determined based on the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis guidelines, where the minimum number of ideal respondents is ten times the number of indicators, so that the number of samples 203 can be considered representative (Hair et al., 2019). Data analysis was carried out using the SEM approach based on Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM). Table 1 displays the demographic information of the respondents to this study.

**Table 1.** Demographic data of respondents

Profiles	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	91	44.83
Female	112	55.17
Age		
17 – 25 years old	83	40.89
26 – 35 years old	67	33.00
36 – 45 years old	33	16.26
> 45 years old	20	9.85
Education		
High school	81	39.90
Diploma	25	12.32
Bachelor degree	70	34.48
Master degree	19	9.36
Doctoral degree	8	3.94
Occupation		
Student	105	51.72
Self-employed	47	23.15
Civil servant	29	14.29
Others	22	10.84

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

This study employed the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach for data analysis, a powerful statistical method commonly utilized to investigate intricate relationships among latent variables. To facilitate the analysis, SmartPLS 4 software was employed, enabling the systematic evaluation of both the measurement and structural models. The initial phase of the analysis involved an evaluation of the measurement model to confirm the validity and reliability of the constructs, ensuring that the operationalization of the variables was appropriate and consistent. As presented in Table 2, all indicator loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold, demonstrating strong evidence of their consistency in accurately representing the respective constructs. This is a critical requirement in structural equation modelling, as it indicates that each indicator reliably reflects its underlying construct. Furthermore, the constructs' reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, both exceeding the accepted threshold of 0.70. The values indicate the internal consistency and reliability of the constructs. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, which is a crucial criterion for establishing convergent validity. Convergent validity is essential for confirming that the indicators share a significant amount of variance with their respective constructs, thus ensuring the soundness of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). This comprehensive assessment of the measuring model establishes a robust basis for advancing to the following structural analysis.

**Table 2.** Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability

Items	Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Credibility				
CR1	0.808			
CR2	0.785			
CR3	0.806	0.626	0.851	0.893
CR4	0.768			
CR5	0.787			
Interactivity				
INT1	0.819			
INT2	0.732	0.683	0.845	0.895
INT3	0.873			

INT4	0.872			
Attractiveness				
ATT1	0.772			
ATT2	0.825	0.622	0.701	0.832
ATT3	0.768			
Trust				
TRU1	0.837			
TRU2	0.827			
TRU3	0.851	0.699	0.856	0.903
TRU4	0.827			
Purchase Intention				
PI1	0.895			
PI2	0.842	0.759	0.841	0.904
PI3	0.876			

Furthermore, discriminant validity was thoroughly evaluated through the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT), a well-established standard for confirming that the constructs within the model are adequately differentiated. The HTMT values for all construct pairs were found to be below the threshold of 0.85 (refer to Table 3), which is a well-established cut-off point for establishing discriminant validity. This result signifies that there is no significant overlap between the constructs, confirming that they are sufficiently differentiated and that the model does not suffer from issues of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). Based on these data, it may be inferred that the measurement model fits the necessary criteria, and hence, it is deemed appropriate to proceed with the structural analysis phase.

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity results (HTMT)

Constructs	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Attractiveness	-	-	-	-	-
(2) Credibility	0.654	-	-	-	-
(3) Interactivity	0.488	0.295	-	-	-
(4) Purchase Intention	0.679	0.583	0.705	-	-
(5) Trust	0.703	0.733	0.623	0.784	-

### 3.2 Structural Model Evaluation

During the assessment phase of the structural model, as seen in Table 4, the bootstrapping outcomes with 5,000 sub-samples indicate that credibility ( $\beta = 0.447$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), interactivity ( $\beta = 0.353$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), and attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.188$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ) exert a positive influence on customer trust. Consequently, H1, H2, and H3 in this investigation are affirmed. The results indicate a significant positive influence of consumer trust on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.667$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Consequently, H4 is likewise recognized.

**Table 4.** Direct Effect Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	T statistics	P values	R <sup>2</sup>
Credibility -> Trust	0.447	9.193	0.000	
Interactivity -> Trust	0.353	5.369	0.000	0.579
Attractiveness -> Trust	0.188	2.945	0.002	
Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.667	13.063	0.000	0.445

Furthermore, the indirect effect analysis confirmed that consumer trust positively mediates the influence of credibility ( $\beta = 0.298$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), interactivity ( $\beta = 0.236$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), and attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.125$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ) on purchase intention (see Table 5). Thus, H5a-H5c are accepted. The R<sup>2</sup> values for the trust and purchase intention variables are 0.579 and 0.445, respectively, signifying that the model possesses considerable predictive capability (refer to Table 4).

**Table 5.** Indirect Effect Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	T statistics	P values
Credibility -> Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.298	8.073	0.000
Interactivity -> Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.236	4.432	0.000
Attractiveness -> Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.125	2.846	0.002

### 3.3 Discussion

The study's findings indicate that the credibility of TikTok live streamers positively and significantly affects consumer trust. Within the framework of the S-O-R model, credibility functions as an external stimulus that triggers an internal response in the form of a perception of trust. Consumers who view

live streamers as competent and honest figures will experience increased confidence in the information conveyed, thus forming a strong basis of trust in the promoted product. This outcome corresponds with the study by Hsu and Hu (2024) which underscores the significance of the perceived credibility of the message source in influencing consumers' psychological responses, particularly in contexts characterized by limited physical interaction, such as live streaming commerce.

The engagement of live streamers has been demonstrated to enhance consumer trust. Within the S-O-R model framework, interactivity is positioned as a social stimulus that creates a two-way communication experience between live streamers and audiences. Responsive interactions, such as responding to comments, mentioning usernames, or responding to questions in real-time, strengthen emotional engagement and create the perception that live streamers care and are authentic. This forms a psychological condition for consumers (organisms) in the form of a sense of being appreciated and cared for, which ultimately increases trust in live streamers and the products offered. This finding supports previous literature showing that the quality of interactions in digital communication can reduce perceived risk and build closeness, thereby strengthening trust in the context of online interactions (Chang et al., 2023; Cheng et al., 2025).

The attractiveness of live streamers also shows a positive influence on consumer trust. From the perspective of the S-O-R model, attractiveness functions as an affective stimulus that influences consumers' emotional assessments of live streamers. Visually attractive individuals tend to be associated with other positive characteristics such as intelligence and honesty. This initial attraction can stimulate positive reactions in the consumer's organism, creating a perception of closeness and comfort that facilitates the formation of trust. This finding is in line with previous research showing that the attractiveness of the message source can increase the effectiveness of marketing communications, especially in visual media such as TikTok, which ultimately forms consumer trust (Xiao et al., 2025; Zou & Fu, 2024).

Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrate that consumer trust exerts a favorable and significant influence on purchase intention. In the context of live streaming-based marketing, trust is a key element that encourages consumers to respond positively to product recommendations conveyed by streamers. Trust includes perceptions of the streamer's credibility, honesty, and competence in conveying product information authentically and persuasively. When consumers believe that the streamer has good intentions and delivers honest reviews, the level of comfort and confidence in the products offered increases, which ultimately strengthens the intention to purchase. This discovery aligns with prior research in the digital marketing literature, which emphasizes that trust is an important predictor in forming behavioral intentions, especially in social media-based interactions and real-time e-commerce (Chang et al., 2023; Ding et al., 2025).

Finally, the results of this study indicate that consumer trust acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness of TikTok live streamers on purchase intention, which can be explained through the S-O-R model framework. In this model, the characteristics of live streamers function as external stimuli that influence the internal condition of consumers (organisms), namely the formation of trust as a psychological response to the perception of communication quality and the personality of the messenger. This trust then drives the final response in the form of an intention to purchase the product promoted during the live-streaming session. This finding confirms that trust is not only the result of positive perceptions of live streamers but also an important psychological mechanism that bridges external stimuli with consumer behavior. Thus, trust functions as a crucial link between the personal qualities of live streamers and consumer purchasing decisions, strengthening the validity of the S-O-R model in explaining the dynamics of consumer behavior in the context of live streaming-based digital marketing. This finding strengthens previous studies on the important role of consumer trust as a mediator (Fu et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2024).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this study shows that the credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness of TikTok live streamers have a positive effect on consumer purchase intentions, both directly and indirectly through trust mediation, which is in line with the S-O-R model framework. The personal characteristics of live streamers act as external stimuli that can trigger consumers' internal reactions in the form of trust (organism), which then influences the final response in the form of purchase

intentions. Credibility is proven to be the most dominant stimulus factor, followed by interactivity and attractiveness, in forming strong trust in the information and products conveyed. Trust has a crucial moderating function, strengthening the path of influence between live streamer characteristics and purchase intentions, and emphasizing the importance of psychological processes in bridging perceptions of communicators with consumer behavior.

This study provides important theoretical implications where the S-O-R model is a relevant and adaptive conceptual framework in explaining consumer behavior in the digital marketing era, especially in the context of live streaming commerce on the TikTok platform. By including the credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness of live streamers as stimuli, and trust as a representation of the organism, this study makes an important contribution to the literature by expanding the understanding of how digital communicator characteristics can influence consumer behavioral intentions. The results of this study also highlight consumer trust as a crucial psychological mediation mechanism, strengthening the position of this variable as a link between interpersonal stimuli and behavioral responses in the context of technology-based marketing communications. These findings expand the scope of the application of the S-O-R theory by including social and affective elements in the stimulus and underscore the importance of considering the emotional and cognitive dimensions of consumers in building a more holistic theoretical model in the digital marketing realm.

In addition, this study also provides important practical implications where marketers and brand owners who utilize TikTok as a live streaming commerce platform need to strategically select and manage live streamers by considering three key dimensions: credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness. Credibility, which includes expertise and honesty, has been shown to be the most dominant factor in building consumer trust, which then plays a significant role in driving purchase intent. Therefore, training live streamers to convey accurate information and demonstrate integrity is crucial. In addition, increasing interactivity with the audience through active and responsive two-way communication can strengthen emotional connections and consumer engagement. The visual appeal and personality of the live streamer should also not be overlooked, as they can create a positive initial impression that supports the formation of trust. Overall, these results suggest that building an authentic, engaging, and trustworthy live-streaming experience is key to optimizing the conversion of intent to purchase in influencer-based digital marketing strategies.

This study possesses various limitations that must be acknowledged when analyzing the results and guiding future research. First, the cross-sectional design of the study restricts the capacity to longitudinally assess the dynamics of changes in trust and purchase intention, so it cannot conclude a full causal relationship. Second, the sample used is limited to TikTok users, which may affect the generalization of the results to a wider population. Third, the focus of the study is only on three characteristics of live streamers (credibility, interactivity, and attractiveness), while other dimensions such as authenticity, communication style, or brand fit also have the potential to influence consumer trust and behavior. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a longitudinal or experimental approach to test the causal relationship in more depth, expand the demographic scope of respondents, and include additional relevant variables to achieve a deeper understanding of the factors that affect the efficacy of live streaming commerce on social media platforms.

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