

From Social Media to E-Commerce: How TikTok Live and Sales Promotions Shape User Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

The rise of digital transformation has positioned social media as a key driver of e-commerce growth in Indonesia, with TikTok Shop emerging as a leading platform through its live features and promotional campaigns. This study examines the impact of TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions on user purchase decisions, using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as a theoretical framework, in which the central and peripheral routes of persuasion play distinct roles in the consumer decision-making process. This study employed a quantitative approach by surveying 160 active TikTok users who had previously purchased on TikTok Shop. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. Findings reveal that both TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions positively and significantly influence purchase decisions, with sales promotions exhibiting a stronger effect. This study emphasizes the importance of combining informative live content with appealing promotional strategies to strengthen consumer engagement and drive sales. Future research is recommended to focus on specific brands and to incorporate additional variables, such as marketing content quality, viral marketing, online trust, or impulsive buying behavior.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: 27 December 2024

Revised: 31 May 2025

Accepted: 31 January 2026

KEYWORDS

e-commerce; live exposure;
purchase decision; sales
promotion; tiktok shop

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce in Indonesia has witnessed significant growth in recent years, a trend expected to continue as internet penetration, widespread smartphone use, and the rise of a tech-savvy middle class continue to grow (Jayani, 2019). This transformation accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted a behavioral shift toward online shopping as consumers sought convenience, flexibility, and safety (Kawasaki et al., 2022; Yusuf, 2022). As a result, e-commerce has become embedded in everyday life, facilitated through various digital

devices (Reinartz et al., 2019). In Indonesia, the e-commerce landscape is predominantly led by significant platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Lazada (Dharma et al., 2024; Waoma et al., 2024).

The rapid advancement of digital technology has reshaped the business landscape by integrating social media into both marketing and transactional ecosystems. Social media use in Indonesia has grown significantly, reaching 139 million active users by early 2024 (Kemp, 2024). As technology continues to evolve, social media has emerged as a core component of digital business strategy, serving not only as a platform for communication but also as a vital channel for commerce and brand management (Deslia et al., 2022; Kinanti & Amali, 2025). It has become a central tool in influencing consumer preferences, enhancing business performance, and streamlining marketing activities (Anjorin et al., 2024; Bushara et al., 2023). Among these social media platforms, TikTok has emerged as a key player, offering a unique blend of short-form video content, personalized algorithms, and user-friendly features that engage a large youth demographic (Kaye et al., 2022; Klug et al., 2021).

The introduction of TikTok Shop in 2021 marked a significant shift in the evolution of social commerce, enabling users to browse and purchase products directly within the app seamlessly (Bray, 2024; Nugroho & Amali, 2025). Despite regulatory setbacks, such as the temporary suspension of TikTok Shop in October 2023 due to licensing issues (Siswapranata & Mediawati, 2024; Wardani, 2023), it quickly re-entered the market through a strategic partnership with GoTo, Indonesia's largest startup (Hardiansyah, 2023). By early 2023, TikTok Shop had facilitated over 100 million product sales, attracted 50 million buyers, and generated approximately USD 1 billion in revenue (Darmawan, 2023). This rapid growth illustrates TikTok's transformation from a purely entertainment platform into a powerful digital marketing tool that effectively drives social commerce (Amali & Farohi, 2025; Duan, 2025).

A pivotal feature that has greatly contributed to TikTok Shop's success is TikTok Live, which allows sellers and influencers to showcase products in real time, offer exclusive promotions, and engage directly with audiences (Xin et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). This real-time interaction creates an immersive and authentic shopping experience that fosters trust, builds urgency, and often triggers impulse purchases (Ma, 2023; Qu et al., 2023). For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), TikTok Live exposure offers a low-cost yet effective way to boost visibility and consumer engagement (Pongratte et al., 2023; Viona et al., 2023).

Another crucial factor contributing to TikTok Shop's rapid success is its massive sales promotion campaign. TikTok has heavily invested in sales promotions, spending between USD 600–800 million on incentives such as discounts and flash sales to compete with Shopee and Tokopedia (Setyowati, 2023). Sales promotions leverage consumer psychology, particularly FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and perceived savings, to drive immediate purchase decisions (Fumar et al., 2023; Malik & Sachdeva, 2015). These promotions boost transaction volume and reinforce TikTok Shop's positioning in a saturated market.

Furthermore, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) provides a foundational conceptual framework for understanding how TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions contribute to achieving marketing goals. ELM explains how these two marketing

communication tactics can be integrated to enhance the persuasiveness of marketing messages delivered to consumers. Prior studies have also applied ELM to similar phenomena, confirming the model's relevance in analyzing consumer behavior in digital and social commerce environments (Fang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025; Yang & Lee, 2024). According to ELM, consumers process marketing messages through either the central or peripheral route, each shaping attitudes and purchase decisions in distinct ways (Griffin et al., 2019; Littlejohn et al., 2021).

The central route involves a deliberate and thoughtful evaluation of message content, typically activated when consumers are highly motivated and capable of processing information. On TikTok Live, users can engage by attentively watching real-time product demonstrations and participating in two-way interactions with hosts (Wang et al., 2025). Conversely, the peripheral route is guided by external cues, such as emotional triggers, visual appeal, or promotional incentives, without in-depth scrutiny of the message. For instance, limited-time discounts or flash sales on TikTok can stimulate impulsive decisions by evoking a sense of urgency or excitement rather than critical assessment (Handayani et al., 2025; Ngo et al., 2024).

Prior studies might have established the influence of social media and live streaming exposure on consumer perceptions and behaviors (Amali, 2024; Dubey & Sinha, 2023; Nyazabe et al., 2025), as well as the significant impact of sales promotions on consumer behavior (Rada & Efriyanti, 2022; Wulandari et al., 2024). However, limited research has specifically explored the combined influence of TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions on purchase decisions. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions simultaneously influence consumer purchase decisions, using the ELM framework to better understand the phenomenon.

Moreover, integrating TikTok's live-streaming feature with time-limited promotional tactics capitalizes on real-time engagement and the psychological appeal of scarcity. The platform's viral dynamics further enhance persuasion, creating a seamless and interactive shopping experience. This synergy represents the main point of novelty in this study. Accordingly, the research aims to provide empirical insights into the effectiveness of combining TikTok Live and sales promotions as integrated marketing strategies to influence consumer purchase behavior within the social commerce landscape.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach to test hypotheses and explore relationships among key variables: TikTok Live exposure (X1), sales promotions (X2), and purchase decisions (Y). A quantitative design was chosen for its ability to systematically and objectively measure variables and assess causal or correlational relationships between them using statistical tools (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2021). This approach is particularly appropriate for hypothesis testing and generalizing findings from a representative sample to a broader population (Lim, 2024). TikTok live exposure represents detailed information, serving as a cue within the central route, while sales promotion reflects scarcity, functioning as a cue

within the peripheral route (Griffin et al., 2019). This study focuses solely on these two factors to construct a simplified model of consumer decision-making. Nevertheless, a model is a simplified representation of reality (Leeflang et al., 2015).

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software, employing PLS-SEM to examine both the measurement and structural models. PLS-SEM was selected over covariance-based SEM due to its ability to handle non-normal data distributions, model complexity, and multicollinearity issues, especially in studies with modest sample sizes (Abdi & Williams, 2013; Hair et al., 2022). The reliability and validity of constructs were assessed through composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha. The structural model was then analyzed to evaluate path coefficients, R^2 values, and predictive relevance (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023).

Data were collected via an online survey using purposive sampling. The final sample consisted of 160 respondents, selected based on two inclusion criteria: (1) being active TikTok users, and (2) having made at least one purchase on TikTok Shop. While purposive sampling ensures relevance to the research objectives (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020), it may introduce sampling bias by excluding users who do not meet the defined criteria. To address this limitation, respondents' demographic information (age, gender, region, and frequency of TikTok use) was collected and analyzed to ensure a balanced sample representation (Cash et al., 2022).

The sample size justification follows the "10-times rule" commonly used in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), especially in business marketing research (Guenther et al., 2023). This rule recommends a minimum sample size of 10 times the number of the largest construct's indicators (Hair et al., 2022; Wagner & Grimm, 2023). In this study, the purchase decision construct has the highest number of indicators with 6 indicators totaling 16 items (Table 1), resulting in a minimum threshold of 160, which the study meets.

Table 1 Variable Indicators & Total Questions

Variables	Indicators	Total Questions	Adapted from
TikTok Live Exposure (X1)	Frequency	3	Ayuningtyas et al. (2023); Rakhmat (2018).
	Duration	2	
	Attention	3	
Sales Promotion (X2)	Coupon	2	Kotler & Armstrong (2020); Ratu & Tulung (2022)
	Rebates	2	
	Price packs	2	
Purchase Decision (Y)	Product choice	3	Anggraeni & Amali, (2023); Kotler & Armstrong (2020);
	Brand choice	3	
	Channel choice	3	
	Purchase time	2	
	Purchase amount	2	
	Payment method	3	

Table 1 presents a summary of the variable indicators and item distribution used in this study. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of 30 items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Each construct was operationalized through established indicators drawn from the prior literature to ensure both conceptual relevance and empirical reliability. A pre-PLS model pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted to ensure the clarity, reliability, and validity of the measurement items.

TikTok Live Exposure (X1) was measured through three dimensions: frequency, duration, and attention. These indicators were adapted from the foundational work of communication psychology, which emphasizes the importance of these dimensions in determining message impact (Rakhmat, 2018), and were further tested in studies examining media exposure behaviors in digital environments (Ayuningtyas et al., 2023). These dimensions are particularly relevant in live-streaming contexts, where repeated exposure, viewing duration, and focused attention significantly influence user engagement and persuasion.

Sales Promotions (X2) were assessed using three common consumer-oriented marketing strategies: coupons, rebates, and price packs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). These strategies are widely recognized for their ability to stimulate short-term consumer responses and drive purchase intent. They have also been further refined for online retail contexts (Ratu & Tulung, 2022). These forms of promotion are frequently employed on platforms like TikTok Shop to stimulate immediate purchase behavior, and their effectiveness in driving consumer responses has been consistently supported in marketing literature.

Purchase Decisions (Y) were operationalized using six key dimensions: product choice, brand choice, channel choice, purchase time, purchase amount, and payment method. These indicators were adapted from a comprehensive consumer behavior model that identifies elements influencing purchase outcomes across contexts (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). Building on this foundation, these dimensions were further applied and refined in the study of purchase decision-making within fandom communities, demonstrating their relevance in digital and interest-driven consumer environments (Anggraeni & Amali, 2023).

In addition to the primary data, secondary data were obtained from a literature review encompassing journal articles, market reports, and online publications. This review focused on the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), live-streaming content exposure, promotional strategies, and consumer behavior in social commerce, providing the theoretical grounding for the research (Adlini et al., 2022). This study also adhered to standard ethical research procedures. All participants were informed about the study's objectives and gave voluntary informed consent. They were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, and no personally identifiable information was collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research investigates the impact of TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions on user purchase decisions, utilizing the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as the foundational conceptual framework to explain the causal relationships between these variables in marketing

communication. The study's hypothesis is rooted in the premise that TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions may influence user decision-making through either the central, peripheral, or both. To explore these relationships, a survey was conducted among 160 respondents, all active TikTok users who have made transactions on TikTok Shop.

Table 2 Respondent Data

Characteristic	Classification	Percentage
Sex	Male	30.00%
	Female	70.00%
Age	12-17	12.50%
	18-23	38.75%
	24-29	30.00%
	30-35	18.75%
Region	DKI Jakarta	18.80%
	Banten	3.80%
	West Java	13.10%
	Central Java	28.80%
	DI Yogyakarta	13.10%
	Other	22.50%
TikTok Access per Day	< 1 hour	11.25%
	1-3 hours	21.25%
	3-6 hours	32.50%
	> 6 hours	35.00%

The respondent data in Table 2 indicate that TikTok's user base is predominantly young females, with 70.00% identifying as female and 68.75% in the 18 to 29 age range. These demographics exhibit high levels of engagement, with 67.50% of users spending more than three hours daily on the platform and 35.00% accessing TikTok for over six hours each day. These statistics suggest that TikTok is more than just a social media platform for this group; it is an integral part of their daily routines. The high level of engagement, particularly among young adults, underscores TikTok's significant influence on their behaviors and preferences, including shopping habits.

Validity and Reliability Test: Outer Model

The SmartPLS program determines data validity by analyzing the outer model's loading factors and average variance extracted (AVE) values using the PLS Algorithm. Indicators are considered valid when their loading factor values exceed 0.70, and variables are considered valid when their AVE values exceed 0.50 (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023; Ramayah et al., 2018). In this study, the loading factor values for all indicators exceeded the 0.70 threshold after removing four non-informative indicators (questions) that did not meet the validity criteria

(Figure 1). Additionally, the AVE values for all variables exceeded the 0.50 benchmark, as shown in Table 3, confirming the data's validity.

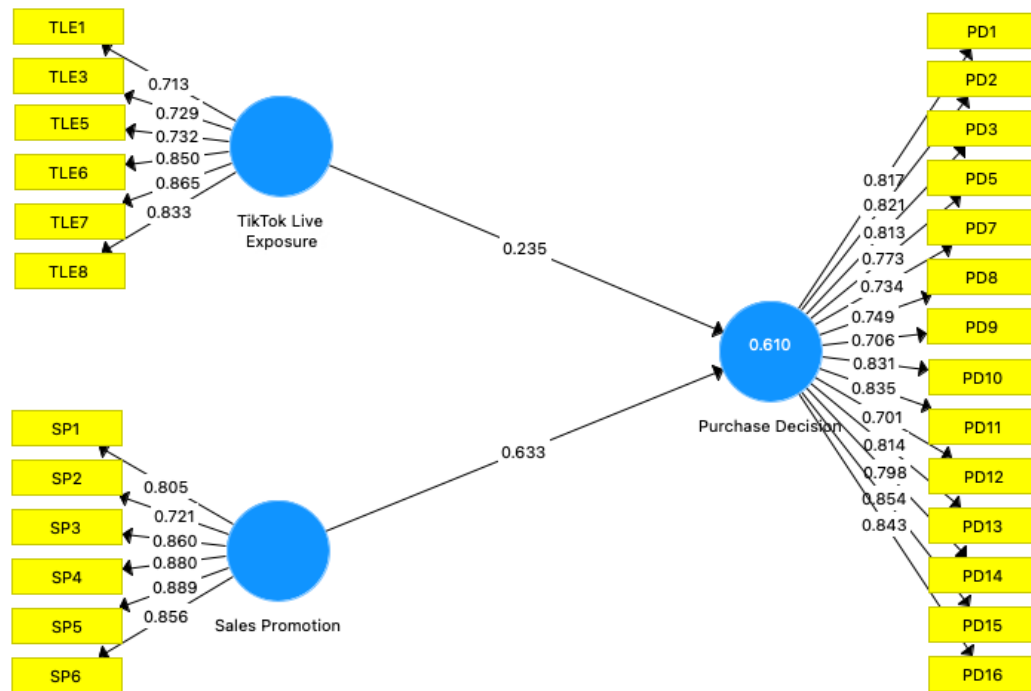


Figure 1 Outer Model

Moreover, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which should be greater than 0.60 to be considered reliable (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023; Ramayah et al., 2018). As shown in Table 3, Cronbach's Alpha values for each variable in this study were above 0.60, confirming the reliability of the measurement scales.

Table 3 Validity & Reliability Test

Variable	AVE Value	Cronbach's Alpha
TikTok Live Exposure	0.623	0.879
Sales Promotion	0.701	0.913
Purchase Decision	0.630	0.954

Hypothesis Test: Inner Model

Inner model testing, or hypothesis testing, is conducted using the bootstrap sampling method. The bootstrap technique in SmartPLS is specifically designed to minimize potential issues arising from noise or anomalies within the research data. One of the key advantages of the PLS (Partial Least Squares) model is its flexibility regarding data distribution, as it does not require the assumption of normal distribution (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023).

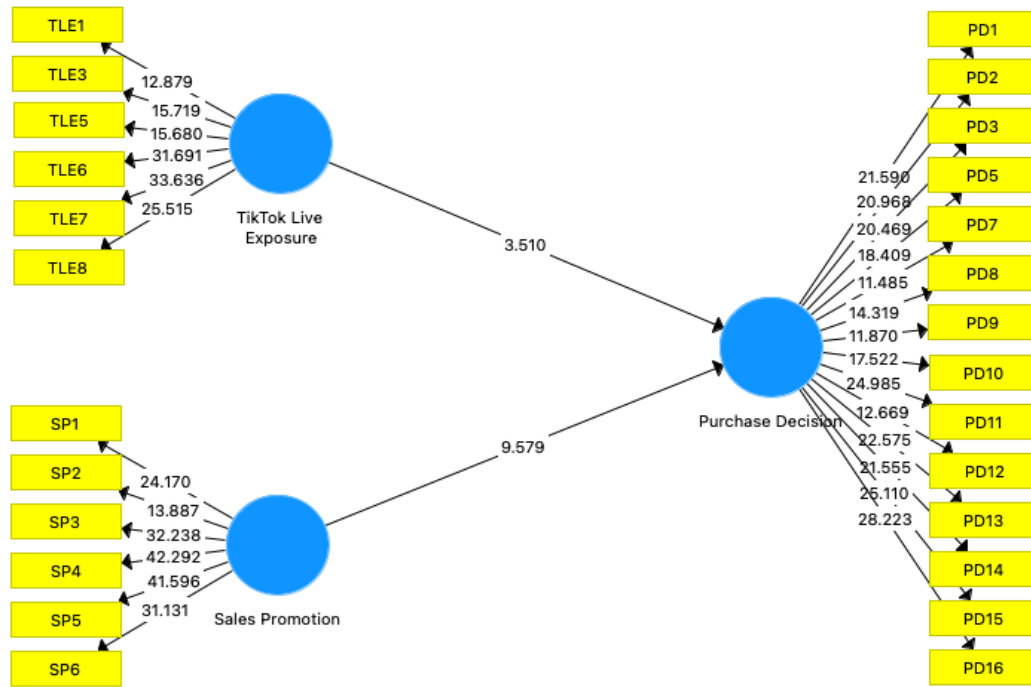


Figure 2 Inner Model

The model's validity is rigorously assessed using the t-statistic. For the results to be considered significant, the t-statistic value must exceed the critical value determined by the t-table. For this study, with a sample size of 160, the t-table value is 1.975. Therefore, for any hypothesis to be supported, the t-statistic derived from the bootstrap method must be greater than 1.975. This ensures that the relationships observed in the model are statistically significant and not due to random chance.

Table 3 Path Coefficients

	O	M	STDEV	T-Statistics	P-Values
TLE → PD	0.235	0.234	0.067	3.510	0.000
SP → PD	0.633	0.634	0.066	9.579	0.000

Based on the results in Table 3 and Figure 2, both independent variables—TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions—significantly influence purchase decisions. This conclusion is supported by the t-statistic values, which exceed the critical t-table value of 1.975, and by the p-values, which are less than 5 percent (0.050). In other words, all the hypotheses in this study are accepted, indicating that the model is a good fit according to the PLS inner model criteria (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023; Hair et al., 2022). Table 3 further reveals that both independent variables have positive original sample values (O), suggesting a direct relationship: the higher the TikTok Live exposure and the more robust the sales promotions, the greater the likelihood that a user will make a purchase decision.

Structural Model Test: Inner Model

The R-square value, a pivotal metric in our study, indicates the extent to which the independent constructs explain variance in the dependent construct, thereby reflecting the model's predictive power. The standard interpretation of R-square values is as follows: 0.75 indicates a strong model, 0.50 indicates a moderate model, and 0.25 indicates a weak model (Hair et al., 2022). Figure 1 shows an R-square of 0.610 for the purchase decision variable, indicating a moderate level of explanatory strength for the model. This finding demonstrates that TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions together account for 61.0% of the variance in purchase decisions, with the remaining 39.0% due to other factors not considered in this research model.

Further analysis of the R-square calculation reveals that sales promotions influence purchase decisions more than TikTok Live exposure. Based on the original sample in Table 3, the influence of sales promotions is quantified at 0.633 (63.30%), while the impact of TikTok Live exposure is measured at 0.235 (23.50%). This suggests that while both variables are significant, sales promotions are more substantial in driving purchase decisions among TikTok Shop users. These findings are significant and align with and build upon prior research, where studies have consistently shown that exposure to social media marketing, including TikTok Live, can significantly influence consumer purchase decisions in online shopping contexts (Febriani & Sudarwanto, 2023; Rahmayanti & Dermawan, 2023; Tranggono et al., 2020). Likewise, these results also align with earlier studies highlighting the substantial impact of sales promotions on consumer purchase decisions (Rada & Efriyanti, 2022; Wulandari et al., 2024).

The purchase decision represents a critical stage resulting from the information processing undertaken by TikTok users. How users receive and interpret persuasive messages is influenced by their approach to information processing. Some users think critically and carefully evaluate the content, while others rely on less necessary, more instinctive processing (Azhari & Amali, 2025; Griffin et al., 2019). In the context of TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) categorizes the impact on decision-making into two primary processes: the central and peripheral routes (Littlejohn et al., 2021). The central route involves a thoughtful and detailed evaluation of the information presented. On social media, this implies that TikTok users exposed to persuasive messages during TikTok Live sessions, where hosts/sellers actively explain product benefits and engage in Q&A, are more likely to process the information deeply (Wang et al., 2025). During these live streams, users critically assess the arguments and evidence presented, leading to more reasoned, informed purchase decisions. The role of an active host is crucial in this context, as their presence fosters engagement and effectively captures viewers' attention (Mubarok et al., 2024).

Conversely, the peripheral route entails a more superficial evaluation of the information (Amali & Pudrianisa, 2025). In this context, TikTok users might be swayed by peripheral cues such as an item's scarcity, a key element often highlighted in sales promotions. These promotions emphasize the limited availability of coupons, rebates, or price packs, creating a sense of urgency and driving consumers to make quick decisions. This psychological appeal is

deeply rooted in consumer behavior principles, where the perception of saving money often outweighs the actual monetary benefit (Kotler & Keller, 2021). By creating a fear of missing out (FOMO), these promotions push consumers to act quickly, boosting short-term sales and inventory turnover (Fumar et al., 2023; Patel et al., 2024). The role of scarcity in these promotions is crucial, as it can significantly influence consumer opinions and purchase decisions in the marketing communication process (Chou et al., 2022; Wagner & Petty, 2022).

The effectiveness of marketing communication depends on how consumers respond to and process the message. This involves determining whether consumers process messages via the central or peripheral route (Putri et al., 2024). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions can influence decision-making through central and peripheral routes (Shi et al., 2018). TikTok Live exposure encourages users to engage in a more deliberate, thoughtful evaluation of the information presented, fostering deeper cognitive processing. This is particularly evident in Live TikTok Shop, where sellers interact directly with users through live streaming on TikTok. This interaction allows users to make more critical, informed decisions, especially when actively engaged by asking questions about the product's quality and benefits (Asmoro & Rofiah, 2024). In contrast, sales promotions are a short-term, intensive strategy designed to increase consumers' desire to purchase products rapidly (Kotler & Keller, 2021). These promotions often create a sense of scarcity, compelling consumers to act quickly and make purchase decisions without extensive critical consideration (Aziz & Akbar, 2022).

TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions are significant factors influencing user decision-making. However, this study reveals that sales promotions exert a considerably stronger influence than TikTok Live exposure. This finding suggests that most TikTok users rely on the peripheral route to purchase, particularly given the platform's extensive sales promotion campaigns that encourage shopping. Promotions such as discounts, free shipping, shipping discounts, flash sales, and cashback offers are powerful tools that induce impulsive purchasing without prior planning (Bacay et al., 2022; Nuryani et al., 2022). Sales promotion is a strategic marketing activity designed to accelerate the sales of products or services more rapidly and significantly than usual. It incentivizes buyers, distributors, and key stakeholders to encourage sales (Belch & Belch, 2018).

In the broader context of marketing goals, TikTok Live exposure and sales promotions each play complementary roles. When integrated, these two marketing communication tactics can amplify the effectiveness of marketing messages delivered to consumers, contributing to TikTok's transformation from a social media platform into a formidable e-commerce powerhouse. By combining TikTok Shop's live feature with strategic sales promotions, the platform leverages real-time engagement, social proof, seamless shopping experiences, and its inherent viral nature. This integration creates a dynamic and compelling shopping experience that drives user engagement and significantly boosts sales, offering exciting potential for the future of e-commerce (Bray, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, this study concludes that TikTok Shop Live Exposure and Sales Promotions both positively and significantly influence consumers' purchasing decisions. In accordance with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), TikTok Live exposure represents a central route cue, with users' attention, frequency, and duration of engagement indicating deeper message processing. The more frequently and attentively users participate in live sessions, the stronger their purchasing decisions become. Meanwhile, sales promotions act as peripheral route cues, influencing consumers through attractive yet less cognitively demanding stimuli such as discounts, coupons, and rebates.

The findings reveal that both routes play a persuasive role, though the peripheral route (Sales Promotions) exerts a stronger influence than the central route (TikTok Live Exposure). This suggests that while consumers are responsive to informative and engaging live content, they are even more motivated by the immediate appeal of promotional offers. From a managerial standpoint, sellers should integrate both cues by delivering engaging, informative messages during live sessions and diversifying promotional strategies to enhance consumer engagement and conversion. Collaborations with influencers can further strengthen persuasion by enhancing both credibility and appeal.

This study is limited by its broad research scope and generalized object of analysis. Future research should focus on specific brands or product categories on TikTok to gain more contextual insights. Additionally, incorporating variables such as marketing content quality, viral marketing, online trust, or impulsive buying behavior could enrich the understanding of how central and peripheral cues interact. Employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS is also recommended to provide a more detailed and robust analysis of relationships within the ELM framework.

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