

From Viral Trends to Buying Decisions: How TikTok Shop's Interactive Features Shape Consumer Intent among University Students

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social commerce has reshaped digital consumer behaviour, particularly among university students who actively engage with interactive platforms such as TikTok. Despite the growing prominence of TikTok Shop, limited empirical evidence exists on how its platform-specific attributes influence purchase intention within a unified framework. This study addresses this gap by examining the relationships between perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived trust, and online purchase intention among university students in Klang Valley. Grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Trust Theory, the study provides an integrated perspective on technological and psychological determinants of consumer behaviour in social commerce. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted using data collected from 370 university students through a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression techniques to assess both the relationships and predictive effects among variables. The results indicate that all three factors, perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust, have significant positive relationships with online purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). Among these, perceived convenience emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the critical role of seamless user experience in influencing consumer decisions. These findings suggest that TikTok Shop's ability to integrate usability, functional value, and trust-building mechanisms is central to its effectiveness as a social commerce platform. This study contributes to the literature by offering empirical evidence on the combined effects of key determinants within the context of TikTok Shop, an area that remains underexplored. The findings also provide practical insights for platform developers and digital marketers to enhance user experience, strengthen trust, and improve conversion strategies in an increasingly competitive social commerce environment.

Keywords: Social commerce; TikTok Shop; purchase intention; perceived convenience; perceived usefulness; perceived trust

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social commerce has fundamentally transformed consumer behaviour, particularly among digitally active youth who are highly engaged with social media platforms. Social commerce integrates interactive features such as live streaming, user-generated content, and real-time communication into e-commerce environments, enabling seamless engagement and transaction processes. Prior research has demonstrated that social media platforms significantly influence purchase intention by facilitating information exchange, enhancing engagement, and reducing uncertainty in online purchasing contexts (Hu & Zhu, 2022). More recently, platforms such as TikTok have emerged as dominant players in this landscape, leveraging short-

form video content and interactive features to create immersive “shoppertainment” experiences that blend entertainment with commerce (Luo et al., 2025).

The emergence of TikTok Shop has further accelerated the evolution of social commerce by embedding transactional capabilities directly within content consumption. Live streaming commerce, in particular, has been identified as a powerful driver of consumer purchase intention, as it enhances interactivity, provides real-time product information, and fosters trust between sellers and consumers (Qing & Jin, 2022). Empirical studies have consistently shown that key technological and psychological factors, including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use or convenience, and perceived trust, significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour in live-streaming and short-video commerce environments (Zhang et al., 2023; Wu & Huang, 2023).

Despite these advancements, there remains a critical gap in understanding how specific platform attributes shape purchase intention within the context of TikTok Shop, particularly among university students. Existing studies have largely focused on general social commerce platforms or live streaming environments, with limited attention to TikTok as an integrated ecosystem combining content, interaction, and transaction (Katon & Oktavia, 2025). Furthermore, while prior research has examined constructs such as usefulness, trust, and social influence, these variables are often studied in isolation rather than within a unified framework (Qin et al., 2023). This fragmentation limits a comprehensive understanding of how multiple determinants jointly influence consumer behaviour in highly interactive digital environments.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to examine how TikTok Shop’s interactive features influence online purchase intention among university students in Klang Valley. Specifically, this study investigates the relationships between perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived trust, and online purchase intention. By integrating these constructs within a unified framework, this study contributes to the growing body of social commerce literature by providing empirical evidence on the combined effects of technological and psychological factors in shaping consumer decision-making. The findings are expected to offer both theoretical insights and practical implications for platform developers and digital marketers seeking to optimise user engagement and conversion strategies in the rapidly evolving social commerce landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid development of social commerce has attracted significant scholarly attention, particularly in understanding the determinants of consumer purchase intention within interactive digital environments. Social commerce integrates social media functionalities with e-commerce transactions, enabling consumers to engage, interact, and purchase within a single platform. Prior studies have consistently demonstrated that social media usage significantly influences purchase intention by facilitating information exchange, social interaction, and user-generated content (Hu & Zhu, 2022). In particular, platforms such as TikTok, which combine entertainment and commerce, have intensified the role of interactivity and engagement in shaping consumer decision-making. This aligns with emerging evidence that short-form video content and live streaming features enhance consumer purchase intention by increasing perceived value and emotional engagement (Luo et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023).

A central theoretical foundation underpinning this study is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, conceptually related to perceived convenience, are key determinants of behavioural intention (Davis, 1989). In the context of social commerce, these constructs explain how users evaluate platform functionality and usability before forming purchase intentions. Empirical studies have consistently validated these relationships in digital commerce environments. For instance, Siagian et al. (2022) found that perceived ease of use significantly influences perceived usefulness and directly affects behavioural intention, while perceived usefulness itself exerts a strong positive effect on purchase intention. Similarly, Qing and Jin (2022) demonstrated that system quality and information quality enhance perceived usefulness and ease of use, which subsequently increase purchase intention. These findings are further supported by Wang et al. (2021), who highlighted the importance of functional value in shaping consumer decisions in social commerce contexts.

Beyond technological factors, trust has emerged as a critical determinant of consumer behaviour in social commerce. Trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty, particularly in online environments where physical product inspection is not possible. A meta-analysis by Wang et al. (2022) confirmed that trust has a strong and consistent positive effect on purchase intention across various social commerce platforms. Similarly, Wu and Huang (2023) demonstrated that consumer trust significantly enhances purchase intention in live-streaming e-commerce. The importance of trust is further reinforced by Luo et al. (2025), who found that trust not only directly influences purchase intention but also strengthens the impact of platform-related factors such as usefulness and convenience. These findings suggest that trust functions as a key psychological mechanism that supports consumers' confidence in engaging with social commerce platforms such as TikTok Shop.

In addition, interactive and social features embedded within social commerce platforms further influence consumer behaviour. Features such as live streaming, real-time interaction, user reviews, and influencer engagement reduce information asymmetry and enhance consumer confidence. Xu et al. (2022) found that streamer credibility significantly influences consumer trust and purchase intention, while Qin et al. (2023) demonstrated that online reviews and live interaction jointly enhance perceived usefulness and trust. Furthermore, Ao et al. (2023) highlighted that influencer credibility and expertise significantly affect consumer engagement and behavioural intention. These findings indicate that social and relational dynamics complement technological factors in shaping purchase intention within social commerce environments.

Despite strong theoretical and empirical support, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, many studies focus on general social commerce platforms or live-streaming environments, with limited attention to TikTok Shop as an integrated short-video and transactional ecosystem. Second, existing research often examines these constructs in isolation rather than investigating their combined effects, particularly in terms of their relative influence on purchase intention. Third, there is limited empirical evidence focusing on Klang Valley university students, a demographic that is highly engaged in TikTok usage yet underrepresented in current research.

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by examining the combined effects of perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust on online purchase intention within the context of TikTok Shop among Klang Valley university students. Drawing upon the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and supported by prior literature on trust in social commerce, this study proposes that perceived convenience and perceived usefulness influence consumers' evaluation of the platform, while trust enhances confidence and reduces uncertainty, ultimately leading to stronger purchase intention.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Perceived convenience has a significant positive relationship with online purchase intention.

H2: Perceived usefulness has a significant positive relationship with online purchase intention.

H3: Perceived trust has a significant positive relationship with online purchase intention

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the relationships between perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived trust, and students' online purchase intention on TikTok Shop. Data were collected from a total of 370 university students in Klang Valley, representing a sufficiently large sample size to ensure statistical robustness and reasonable generalisability within the target population. A structured questionnaire was developed based on established constructs from prior literature, with all items measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, focusing on active social media users within the university context, given their high exposure to TikTok and familiarity with social commerce features. The final dataset contained no missing values, indicating effective data collection procedures and high response quality.

For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were utilised. Descriptive analysis, including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency, was conducted to summarise respondents' demographic profiles and overall perceptions of the study variables. Subsequently, inferential analysis was performed to test the proposed hypotheses and examine the relationships between variables. Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust influence online purchase intention. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$, while results are reported at $p < 0.001$ to reflect stronger statistical significance. The regression model also allows for the assessment of the explanatory power of the independent variables through the R^2 value. The consistently high mean scores and low standard deviations indicate strong agreement and homogeneity among respondents.

Overall, the use of correlation and multiple regression analysis provides a robust approach in examining both the relationships and predictive effects of the variables. The results confirmed that perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust significantly influence online purchase intention, demonstrating the suitability of the chosen analytical techniques in capturing the strength and direction of these relationships within the context of TikTok Shop usage among university students.

RESULTS

The findings indicate that the study produced a robust, reliable dataset, with 370 valid responses and no missing data across all variables. This complete dataset strengthens the statistical power and internal validity of the analysis, ensuring that data gaps or imputation biases do not compromise the interpretations drawn. The absence of missing values also suggests effective data collection procedures and high respondent engagement, which is particularly important in survey-based research involving university students.

From a demographic perspective, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with females representing 52.2% and males 47.8% of the sample. This near parity enhances the generalisability of the findings across gender groups within the university student population. In terms of age, the sample is heavily skewed towards the 19–25 age group (71.9%), followed by respondents aged 26 and above (16.8%) and those aged 18 and below (11.4%). This concentration reflects the typical demographic structure of university students in Klang Valley and aligns well with the study's focus. However, it also implies that the findings are most representative of young adults in early adulthood, who are likely to be the most active users of TikTok and digital commerce platforms.

The descriptive statistics reveal consistently high mean scores across all independent variables (perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust) as well as the dependent variable (online purchase intention), with values ranging from 4.51 to 4.54 on a 5-point Likert scale. These elevated mean values indicate a strong overall agreement among respondents regarding the positive role of TikTok Shop's interactive features. Notably, perceived convenience (Mean = 4.5446) records the highest score, suggesting that convenience and seamless user experience are highly valued by users. The relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.52 to 0.56) further indicate a high level of consensus among respondents, implying that these perceptions are widely shared rather than polarised.

Further analysis using Pearson correlation indicates that all independent variables are positively and significantly related to online purchase intention ($p < 0.001$), demonstrating strong associations between perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived trust, and consumer intention. More importantly, the multiple regression analysis provides stronger evidence of influence, showing that the overall model is statistically significant ($F = 413.122$, $p < 0.001$) and explains a substantial proportion of variance in online purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.772$). This indicates that 77.2% of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by the three independent variables included in this study.

Specifically, perceived convenience emerges as the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.414$, $p < 0.001$), followed by perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived trust ($\beta = 0.235$, $p < 0.001$). These results confirm that all three variables have a significant positive effect on students' online purchase intention on TikTok Shop, with perceived convenience playing the dominant role.

Inferential analysis, as reflected in the hypothesis testing results, demonstrates that all proposed relationships are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. The consistent acceptance of all three hypotheses suggests that these constructs function as critical determinants within the consumer decision-making process. This aligns with established theoretical frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), where perceived usefulness and perceived convenience play important roles in shaping behavioural intention, while trust extends this framework into the context of social commerce.

Collectively, these findings provide important insights into the mechanisms through which TikTok Shop's features influence consumer behaviour. The combination of high mean scores and strong regression results suggests that students are not only receptive to, but also significantly influenced by, platform features that enhance convenience, provide functional value, and build trust. This implies that TikTok Shop has successfully integrated elements of interactivity, efficiency, and credibility to create a persuasive digital shopping environment. From a strategic perspective, these results highlight the importance for marketers and platform developers to prioritise user-centric design, transparent communication, and trust-building mechanisms in order to sustain and further enhance consumer purchase intention within the competitive landscape of social commerce.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust are all significant predictors of online purchase intention among university students using TikTok Shop, with all relationships supported at a high level of statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). This result is further strengthened by the regression model, which explains a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.772$), indicating strong explanatory power. Among these, perceived convenience emerged as the most influential factor, indicating that seamless navigation, efficient transaction processes, and integrated platform features play a dominant role in shaping consumer behaviour. This finding is consistent with prior studies in digital commerce, which emphasise that convenience reduces cognitive and transactional effort, thereby increasing consumers' likelihood to purchase (Wang et al., 2021; Qing & Jin, 2022).

The prominence of perceived convenience also reflects the relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), where perceived ease of use, conceptually related to convenience, serves as a key determinant of behavioural intention (Davis, 1989). In the context of TikTok Shop, convenience extends beyond usability to include features such as embedded shopping, real-time interaction, and algorithm-driven recommendations, which collectively minimise effort in the decision-making process. This suggests that students are highly responsive to frictionless digital environments, where the process of searching, evaluating, and purchasing products is streamlined.

At the same time, the significant effects of perceived usefulness and perceived trust further reinforce the applicability of TAM and its extensions in social commerce settings. Perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.281$) indicates that consumers are more likely to engage in online purchasing when they perceive the platform as enhancing their shopping efficiency and decision quality, which is consistent with prior findings in digital commerce research (Qing & Jin, 2022). Meanwhile, perceived trust ($\beta = 0.235$) underscores the importance of credibility, security, and reliability in online transactions, particularly in social commerce environments where perceived risk is relatively high (Wu & Huang, 2023).

Collectively, these results confirm that TikTok Shop's interactive ecosystem successfully integrates technological efficiency with psychological assurance, transforming passive content consumption into active purchasing behaviour. The combination of high perceived convenience, usefulness, and trust suggests that the platform is able to address both functional and psychological dimensions of consumer decision-making, which is critical in the highly competitive social commerce landscape.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the influence of perceived convenience, perceived usefulness, and perceived trust on online purchase intention among university students using TikTok Shop in Klang Valley. The findings confirm that all three factors have significant positive relationships with purchase intention, with perceived convenience emerging as the strongest predictor. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the combined effects of technological and psychological factors within the context of TikTok Shop, which remains relatively underexplored. By integrating constructs derived from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Trust Theory, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how consumers evaluate and respond to social commerce platforms.

From a policy and practical perspective, these findings carry important implications for platform developers, digital marketers, and regulatory bodies. Platform providers such as TikTok should prioritise enhancing user experience through intuitive interface design, faster transaction processes, and personalised recommendations to sustain high levels of perceived convenience. At the same time, strengthening trust mechanisms such as verified sellers, transparent review systems, and secure payment gateways is essential to mitigate consumer risk perceptions. These strategies are particularly important given that trust remains a significant predictor of purchase intention, even in highly interactive and entertainment-driven environments. Policymakers and regulators should also play a proactive role in establishing clearer guidelines for social commerce, particularly in areas related to consumer protection, data privacy, and product authenticity. This is crucial in ensuring that the rapid growth of platforms like TikTok Shop does not compromise user safety and confidence, especially among younger consumers who are more vulnerable to misleading content and impulsive purchasing behaviours. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on university students in Klang Valley, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings.

For future research, several directions can be considered to extend the current study. First, future studies could incorporate additional variables such as social influence, entertainment value, or impulse buying behaviour to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer decision-making in social commerce. Second, longitudinal research designs are recommended to examine changes in consumer behaviour over time, particularly as TikTok Shop continues to evolve and introduce new features. Third, expanding the sample beyond university students to include a more diverse demographic profile would enhance the generalisability of findings. Finally, comparative studies across different social commerce platforms or cultural contexts could provide deeper insights into how platform-specific features and socio-cultural factors influence purchase intention. These directions would not only strengthen theoretical development but also provide more nuanced and actionable insights for stakeholders in the rapidly growing social commerce landscape.

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