

Relationship Between Trust, Expertise And Interaction Factor Toward Purchase Intention On Tiktok: A Study Among Higher Learning Institutions Student In Malaysia

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Abstract—This research investigates the influence of trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and parasocial interaction on the purchase intentions of Malaysian TikTok users. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected from three Malaysian higher learning institutions to assess the direct impact of these factors on purchase intention. The study's conceptual framework serves as a structural guide, revealing empirical evidence that highlights the importance of trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and parasocial interaction in shaping users' purchase intentions on TikTok. The findings suggest that marketers can benefit from focusing on enhancing content creators' perceived expertise to increase purchase intentions. Future research may explore causal relationships among these factors, cross-cultural impacts, and their long-term effects on consumer loyalty and marketing strategy effectiveness.

Keywords: Trustworthiness; Perceived Expertise; Parasocial Interaction

1. INTRODUCTION

The internet has evolved into a critical space for consumer engagement, where people can connect with and explore a variety of products on unified platforms (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024). Today, consumers' exposure to commercial content is largely self-directed, which makes the credibility and relatability of content highly influential. Since its launch in 2016, TikTok has become a dynamic platform for short, tailored video content, creating an environment where users form quick yet meaningful connections with content creators (Kashcheev, 2022). As TikTok's influence grows, understanding the drivers of consumer behavior, such as trustworthiness, expertise, and parasocial interaction, is essential for marketers aiming to increase purchase intentions on the platform.

Trustworthiness is a critical component in influencing consumer decision-making, as it encompasses the honesty, reliability, and perceived ethics of influencers. Consumers who perceive influencers as trustworthy are more likely to develop positive purchase intentions, as they rely on these influencers to deliver credible information and recommendations (Nilsson, Nilsson, & Johansson, 2023).

Perceived expertise refers to the influencer's knowledgeability and authority on specific topics or products. However, findings suggest that on platforms like TikTok, consumers may prioritize trustworthiness and relatability over technical expertise, particularly given the platform's short, entertaining content format (Tanrikulu & Erdur-Baker, 2021). This creates a unique context where expertise may play a secondary role in influencing consumer decisions.

Parasocial interaction (PSI), or the one-sided connections users form with influencers, represents another critical factor in shaping consumer behavior. By fostering feelings of familiarity and connection, parasocial interaction creates a sense of intimacy that encourages consumers to emulate influencers' actions, often including their purchase decisions (Wu, Wang, & Li, 2019). Research highlights that Generation Z, a primary TikTok audience, is particularly influenced by these one-sided connections in forming brand preferences and purchase intentions (Tanrikulu & Erdur-Baker, 2021).

This study investigates the influence of trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and parasocial interaction on TikTok purchase intention among Northern Malaysian higher learning Institution students, addressing gaps in the literature on how these factors uniquely interact to shape digital consumer behavior.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses quantitative research methods to collect information and data through a 'Google form' as well as data that will be collected from three different higher learning institutions: Polytechnic Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (PTSS), Polytechnic Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (POLIMAS) and Polytechnic Seberang Perai (PSP). The objective of this study is to determine the factors that influence the selection of artificial products among consumers. This objective is a correlational analysis of the study.

This study was conducted using a quantitative research approach. The study used questionnaires and strata random sampling to collect the necessary data. This questionnaire contains seven sections, where Section A, is a demographic data question. The questions in Part B and subsequent sections pertain to the variables under study.

The total population of this study obtained from the three institutions was 11,800 students from semester one to semester five, and the sample size was 370 respondents, as recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sample size yielded only 151 responses, out of which only 150 were suitable for analysis. Research measurements

have been made on the dependent variable, which is purchasing artificial products, as well as the other five independent variables, such as trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and parasocial interaction. The items measured for all variables were taken and adapted from previous studies. While the items to measure the respondents, demographics have been self-developed, The items include gender, age, and institution.

2.1 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention reflects both consumer interest in a product and the likelihood of them making an actual purchase (Kim & Ko, 2012). It is akin to the probability of someone purchasing an item after encountering it on social media (Choedon & Lee, 2020). Understanding purchase intention is essential for companies, as it gauges a consumer's readiness to buy. Businesses continuously innovate to influence consumer purchasing behavior, often through viral marketing, which has proven particularly effective on platforms like TikTok (Rabidas & Bowen, 2019; Haryanto et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of identifying factors that drive purchase intention in the current digital marketing landscape.

2.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, defined as the perceived reliability, credibility, and integrity of influencers and brands, plays a significant role in shaping consumer behavior on TikTok. Increasing trustworthiness is essential, especially when targeting Generation Z, TikTok's main demographic (Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022; Rizma & Marsasi, 2024). Research has shown that trustworthiness influences consumer behavior on social media platforms (Kim & Park, 2017), yet its specific effects on Malaysian TikTok users remain underexplored. By establishing trust, influencers and brands can more effectively foster purchase intentions.

2.3 Perceived Expertise

Perceived expertise refers to an influencer's perceived knowledge, skill, or experience in a particular field, such as fashion, beauty, or fitness (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022). Influencers who are viewed as knowledgeable or skilled in their niche can significantly affect consumer satisfaction with advertising content, as well as build trust (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022). While several studies indicate a strong positive link between perceived expertise and purchase intention (Magano et al., 2022), recent findings challenge this notion on TikTok. Research by Johansson, Nilsson, & Nilsson (2023) revealed that perceived expertise did not impact TikTok purchase intention, suggesting the need for further research to understand how perceived expertise varies across different social media platforms and cultural contexts.

2.4 Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial interaction (PSI) describes the one-sided relationships users form with media personalities, such as celebrities and influencers, resembling real-life friendships and connections. Originating in traditional media (television, radio), PSI has been amplified on social media, where users can interact more personally with influencers (Labrecque, 2020). Research shows that PSI influences consumer behavior, especially among millennials making beauty product purchases through celebrity endorsements (Khaerunnisaa, 2024). This study explores how PSI and the need for social belonging mediate the impact of social media interactions and influencer connections on consumer purchase intentions. Examining PSI on TikTok is essential to understanding how it influences consumer behavior and purchase decisions.

2.5 Research Conceptual Framework

The literature's discussion of variables has facilitated the development of the research framework. Therefore, Figure 1 below summarizes the research conceptual framework.

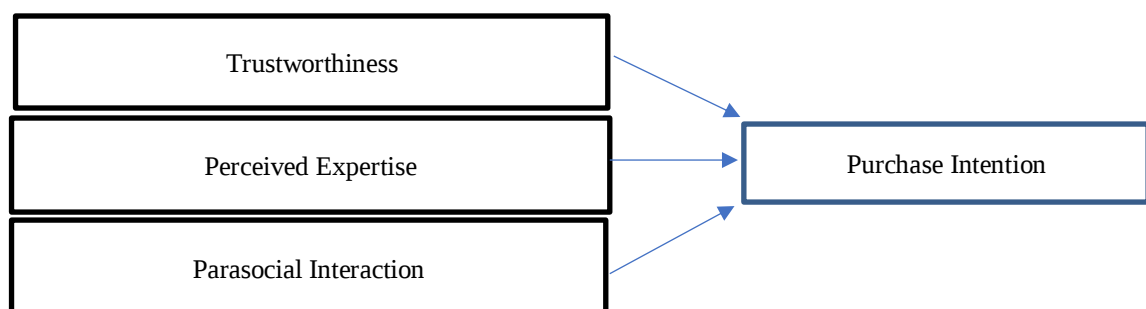


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

The research conceptual framework acts as a guide and structure that supports the study. The formation of a research framework and hypothesis is critical in determining the variables that have a relationship with TikTok purchasing factors. The research framework above guided the conduct of this study, which aimed to investigate the

direct purchase intention relationship between the variables of trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and parasocial interaction.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the characteristics of respondents, consisting of gender, age, race, semester, and institution. All of the aforementioned characteristics are found in the demographic section.

Table 1. Demographic of Respondents

Bil	Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	73	48.3
		Female	77	51.0
2	Age	Below 20 years	19	12.6
		20-21 years	86	57.0
		Above 21 years	45	30.0
3	Institution	PTSS	59	39.3
		POLIMAS	50	33.3
		PSP	41	27.3
4	Experience	Multiple times a day	83	55.0
		Once a day	19	12.6
		Multiple times a week	26	17.2
		Few times a week	13	8.6
		Not often	9	6.0
5	Purpose	Inspiration	19	12.6
		Entertainment	72	47.7
		Create Videos	16	10.6
		Product recommendations	14	9.3
		Gaining Knowledge	29	19.2
		Others	0	0

The table above contains demographic details of respondents, including gender, age, institution, experience, and purpose. The table reveals a gender percentage of 48.3% for males and 51.0% for females. Furthermore, the age category reveals that 12.6% of the population is under 20 years old. The percentage for those aged 20–21 is 57.0%, while the percentage for those over 21 is 30.0 %. The third item in the institution category has a PTSS percentage of 39.3 %, POLIMAS with 33.3%, and PSP with 27.3%. Experience occurs multiple times a day at 55.0%, once a day at 12%, a few times a week at 17.2%, and less frequently at 8.6%. Last but not least, the purpose category begins with inspiration (12.6%), followed by entertainment (47.7%), video creation (10.6%), products (9.3%), recommendations (19.2%), and finally, gaining knowledge (0%)

3.1 Reliability Testing

Researchers conduct reliability tests to assess the level of reliability of all items and constructs used as measurement tools in a study. Two tests, conducted during the pilot test and the actual study, demonstrate the reliability of the items and constructs used. Table 2 below shows the results of the reliability test through Alpha Cronbach analysis.

Table 2. Alpha Cronbach Value for Reliability Test

Num	Variable	Alpha Value n=30	Alpha Value n=150	Pallant (2007)
	Purchase Intention	.917	.913	Approve
1	Trustworthiness	.945	.901	Approve
2	Perceived Expertise	.873	.906	Approve
3	Parasocial Interaction	.906	.899	Approve

In the pilot test, the Alpha Cronbach value for the reliability test of the dependent variable, purchase intention, was 0.917. For the independent variables, trustworthiness has a value of 0.945, perceived expertise (0.873), and parasocial interaction (0.906). Further, in the actual data study test, the alpha value for purchase intention (0.913). For the independent variables, the trustworthiness alpha value is 0.901, perceived expertise (0.906) and lastly, the parasocial interaction value is 0.899. Pallant (2007) suggests that all the measurement tools have a good level of reliability, with the lowest value exceeding 0.80.

3.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 3 below shows Landel's (1997) descriptive analysis results using the mean value and mean interpretation.

Table 3. Result of Descriptive Analysis and Interpretation

Num	Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Landel (1997)
	Purchase Intention	1	5	3.770	High
1	Perceived expertise	1	5	3.835	High
2	Trustworthiness	1	5	3.759	High
3	Parasocial Interaction	1	5	3.712	High

Note: Used a 5-point Likert scale

For the dependent variable, purchase intention, the mean value was 3.770, indicating that the respondents agreed that they intended to make a purchase. The independent variable that has the highest mean value is perceived expertise (3.835), followed by trustworthiness (3.759), and parasocial interaction (3.712). Perceived expertise has reached the highest level of agreement, and parasocial interaction is the lowest level, but it is still in the high category, as suggested by Landel (1997).

3.3 Correlation Analysis

This section discusses the relationship between independent and dependent variables, namely the level of purchase intention, trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and parasocial interaction. This analysis can help understand the relationship between these variables and determine whether they have a significant impact on the collation value results or not. Table 4 shows the results of the correlation analysis using the mean value and correlation strength interpretation by Pallant (2007).

Table 4. Correlation Analysis and Interpretation

Num	Variable	Purchase Intention	Correlation Strength Pallant (2007)
	Purchase Intention	1	Strong
1	Perceived expertise	.716**	Strong
2	Trustworthiness	.670**	Strong
3	Parasocial interaction	.662**	Strong

Note: ** significant correlation at level 0.01 (2-tailed)

* significant correlation at level 0.05 (2-tailed)

Pallant (2007) suggested using the significance level of Pearson's correlation (r) in this study to determine the correlation and linear strength of the relationship between the variables involved. The correlation value of the relationship between purchase intention and the variables involved is at a high level for perceived expertise ($r = .716$), trustworthiness ($r = .670$), and lastly, parasocial interaction ($r = .662$). According to Pallant (2007), perceived expertise has been the most significant relationship among the variables, with parasocial interaction coming in third place, yet still maintaining a strong relationship.

4. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with two main objectives. Descriptive analysis achieved the first objective of the study, while coefficient correlation analysis served as the second. Through the descriptive analysis of the study conducted at 3 Politeknik in the Northern regions of Malaysia, which is Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (PTSS), Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (POLIMAS) and Politeknik Seberang Perai (PSP) it is indicated that all variables that consist of purchase intention, perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and parasocial interaction have high mean values as per Landel's (1997) interpretation. Specifically, perceived expertise has the highest mean value, indicating that students are interested in the expert content creator when it comes to their intention to purchase on TikTok. The lowest, yet still high, mean value is associated with parasocial interaction, indicating that while it is the least influential of the factors studied, it still plays a significant role in the students' purchase intentions. The correlation analysis, interpreted using Pallant's (2007) guidelines, reveals strong relationships between the independent variables and purchase intention. Perceived expertise shows the strongest correlation, followed closely by trustworthiness, indicating that these factors are highly influential in determining students' intentions to purchase on TikTok. Finally, parasocial interaction also shows strong correlations, indicating that it is an important factor in influencing purchase intentions. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) supports these findings, as it posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence intentions and behaviors. The high correlation values for perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and parasocial interaction align with the theory, suggesting that these factors contribute significantly to the students' attitudes toward purchasing. This study's significance lies in its empirical evidence supporting the importance of these factors in influencing purchase

intentions on TikTok among Malaysian students. It suggests that marketers should focus on enhancing the expertise of their content creators, increasing consumer trust, and focusing on positive interaction between audiences to increase purchase intentions. Future research could delve deeper into the causal relationships between these factors and purchase intentions, explore the impact across different cultures, and examine the long-term effects on consumer loyalty and marketing strategy effectiveness.

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