

ONLINE REVIEWS, RATINGS, AND PURCHASE INTENTION IN SOCIAL COMMERCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PRODUCT PHOTOS ON TIKTOK LIVE STREAMING

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-10-2025

Revised : 07-11-2025

Accepted : 30-11-2025

KEYWORDS

Online Customer
Rating, Online
Customer Reviews,
Product Photos,
Purchase Intention.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of Online Customer Ratings (OCRT), Online Customer Reviews (OCR), and product photos on purchase intention for Camille Beauty products on TikTok Shop, grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. A quantitative survey approach was employed, involving 128 Generation Z respondents who actively use TikTok Shop Live Streaming and have experience viewing or purchasing Camille Beauty products. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings provide empirical evidence that online customer ratings, online customer reviews, and product photos significantly predict consumer purchase intention. Moreover, product photos are found to mediate the relationship between online customer ratings and purchase intention, as well as between online customer reviews and purchase intention. These results indicate that visual cues play a critical role in translating experience-based information into consumer decision-making in a live streaming commerce context. This study contributes to the literature on online consumer behaviour by highlighting the mediating role of visual elements in social commerce platforms. From a practical perspective, the findings imply that skincare brands, including Camille Beauty, should strategically manage customer ratings and reviews while optimizing high-quality product photos to enhance consumer trust and increase purchase intention on TikTok Shop Live Streaming.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Social commerce integrates online transactions with social interaction, allowing consumers to rely on peer-generated information when forming purchase decisions rather than solely on firm-generated content (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). The development of live streaming commerce further enhances this process by creating real-time interaction, social presence, and immersive product demonstrations that strengthen consumer engagement

(Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Previous studies indicate that trust, interactivity, and user-generated content are key mechanisms through which social commerce platforms influence consumer behavior and purchase intention (Hajli et al., 2017). As a result, platforms such as TikTok Shop transform online shopping into an experience-based activity, where digital trust and social interaction play a critical role in shaping consumers' purchase intention.

Despite the rapid growth of TikTok Shop, local brands such as Camille Beauty face significant challenges in building consumer trust amid intense competition and product similarity in the beauty industry. Consumers are exposed to abundant information during live streaming sessions, making trust a critical determinant of purchase intention. Online customer reviews function as social proof that reflects prior consumer experiences and influences perceived product quality and credibility. Empirical studies have demonstrated that review valence and credibility significantly affect purchase intention, as consumers tend to regard peer evaluations as more objective than seller-generated promotions (Andjani et al., 2025). Failure to manage customer feedback and visual presentation effectively may weaken consumer confidence and reduce purchasing intention.

Online customer ratings, represented by numerical star indicators, serve as a heuristic cue that helps consumers quickly evaluate product quality and reduce perceived risk. While numerous studies report that ratings significantly predict purchase intention, inconsistent findings remain. For instance, (Irawan et al., 2025) found that ratings did not have a partial effect on purchase intention, suggesting the presence of contextual or mediating factors. Moreover, most prior research has focused on conventional e-commerce platforms such as Shopee or Tokopedia, whereas empirical evidence within the context of TikTok Shop particularly live streaming-based social commerce remains limited. This gap highlights the need to examine how ratings and reviews operate alongside visual elements in shaping consumer behavior.

In online shopping environments, product photos serve as a substitute for physical inspection by enabling consumers to visualize product attributes and reduce uncertainty regarding product quality (Pavlou et al., 2007). High-quality and detailed visual presentations enhance perceived diagnosticity and product value, which in turn positively influence consumers' purchase intention (Jiang et al., 2013). Moreover, user-generated content such as online reviews interacts with visual cues by validating whether product photos accurately represent actual product conditions, thereby strengthening perceived credibility (Xu & Pratt, 2018). In live streaming-based social commerce, this interaction between visual presentation and consumer feedback becomes particularly important, as consumers rely on both images and experiential information to build trust and make purchasing decisions.

Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, this study conceptualizes online customer reviews and ratings as stimuli that provide social information, product photos as the organism that processes visual and emotional perceptions, and purchase intention as the consumer response. By integrating these elements, this study aims to analyze the influence of online customer reviews and ratings on purchase intention, with product photos as a mediating variable, in the context of TikTok Shop Live Streaming for Camille Beauty products. Theoretically, this research extends the application of the S–O–R framework in digital marketing literature by explaining how social and visual cues jointly shape online consumer behavior in social commerce environments.

METHODS

This study was conducted to analyze the influence of online reviews and consumer ratings on purchase intention of Camille Beauty products, with product photos as a mediating variable in the context of TikTok Shop live streaming. This study used a quantitative approach through a survey method, where a questionnaire was the main instrument in collecting data. The variables measured included online customer reviews, customer ratings, product photo quality, and purchase intention. Research participants were TikTok Shop users who had participated in live streaming sessions and had experience viewing or purchasing Camille Beauty products. The selection of location and respondent characteristics was based on the high consumer activity in the beauty product category on the platform, so that the research context was relevant and in accordance with current digital market phenomena. The number of

samples was determined using the Hair formula, which is 5–10 times the number of research indicators, because the population size is not known with certainty. The collected data were then analyzed using the PLS-SEM method through SmartPLS 3.0 software, including two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model and evaluation of the structural model.

The population of this study consisted of TikTok Shop users who had experience interacting with Camille Beauty products through live streaming features. Because the exact population size was unknown, a non-probability sampling technique was applied using purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: (1) belonging to Generation Z, (2) actively using TikTok Shop, (3) having watched TikTok Shop live streaming sessions featuring Camille Beauty products, and (4) having experience viewing or purchasing Camille Beauty products through the platform. A total of 128 valid responses were collected and deemed sufficient for analysis using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), following the rule-of-thumb that the minimum sample size should be five to ten times the number of indicators used in the research model (Hair et al., 2020).

Online Customer Reviews (OCR) were operationalized as consumers' perceptions of written evaluations provided by other customers regarding Camille Beauty products on TikTok Shop. This variable reflects the credibility, usefulness, and valence of reviews that convey experiential information and influence consumers' trust and purchase evaluation.

Online Customer Ratings (OCRt) were defined as consumers' perceptions of numerical star ratings displayed on TikTok Shop product pages. This variable represents a heuristic cue that signals overall product quality and helps consumers reduce perceived risk during the decision-making process.

Product Photos were operationalized as consumers' perceptions of the quality, clarity, and informativeness of product images displayed during TikTok Shop live streaming and product listings. This variable captures the extent to which visual representations help consumers understand product attributes and build confidence in purchasing decisions. Purchase Intention was defined as consumers' subjective likelihood or willingness to purchase Camille Beauty products through TikTok Shop. This variable reflects consumers' readiness to engage in purchasing behavior after evaluating available information and visual cues.

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to respondents who met the predefined sampling criteria. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed to measure perceptions related to online customer reviews, online customer ratings, product photos, and purchase intention. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance of the items. Respondents completed the survey voluntarily, and only fully completed questionnaires were included in the analysis.

This study adhered to standard ethical research procedures. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained electronically, and respondents were assured that their identities would remain anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were treated confidentially and used solely for academic research purposes. Respondents were free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares approach (PLS-SEM). This method was chosen due to its suitability for predictive analysis and its ability to handle complex models with relatively small sample sizes. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4.0. The analysis followed a two-stage evaluation procedure. The measurement model was assessed through indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). The structural model evaluation included the assessment of path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R-square), effect size (f-square), and mediation effects using a bootstrapping procedure. (Ringle et al., 2023). Bootstrapping procedures were applied to test the significance of the hypothesized relationships.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The following is a summary of the results of the respondents' descriptions:

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	100	78,1
	Male	28	21,9
Age	13 – 16 years	13	10,2
	17 – 20 years	80	62,5
	21 – 24 years	25	19,5
	25 – 28 years	10	7,8
Education Status	Junior High School (SMP)	8	6,2
	Senior High School/Vocational School (SMA/SMK/MA)	50	39,1
	Higher Education (Diploma/Bachelor's Degree)	30	23,4
	College Graduate	40	31,3
	Total	128	100

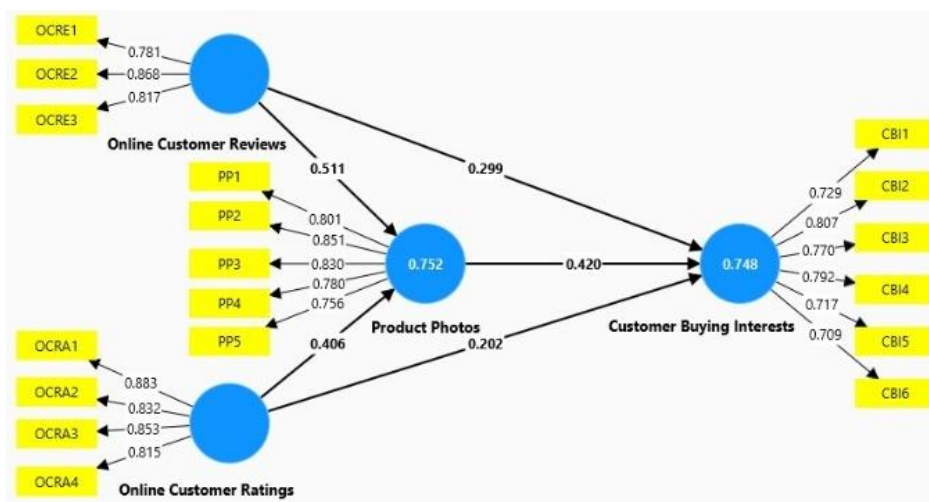
Source(s): Table by authors

Based on the characteristics of the respondents, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents were female (78.1%). This indicates that women are Camille Beauty's primary target consumers and are more actively engaged in digital beauty content, including product reviews, ratings, and purchasing decisions via live streaming platforms. The majority of respondents were aged 17-20 (62.5%). This age group is highly connected to social media, values visual digital content, and tends to rely on online information such as customer reviews, influencer recommendations, and live demonstrations before making purchase decisions. Their purchasing behavior is often emotional, driven by experience, and influenced by authenticity and social proof. The educational status of most respondents was high school or vocational school (SMA/SMK/MA). Their engagement in TikTok Shop Live Streaming indicates that the interactive shopping format appeals to young consumers due to the live demonstrations, the opportunity to ask questions, and the perception of content generated by trusted peers.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model evaluation was conducted as the initial stage of the PLS-SEM analysis to assess the validity and reliability of the research constructs. The results are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Measurement Model (Outer Model)



Source: Data Processing Results using Smart-PLS 4.0 (2025)

Based on established PLS-SEM guidelines, all indicators demonstrated adequate convergent validity and reliability, with outer loading values exceeding 0.70 and composite reliability values meeting the minimum threshold of 0.70. As all indicators satisfied the recommended criteria, no indicators were removed from the model, and the analysis proceeded to the evaluation of the structural model.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-to-monotrait ratio (HTMT). The HTMT results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Heretroit-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Value

	Customer Buying Interests	Online Customer Rating	Online Customer Reviews	Product Photos
Customer Buying Interests				
Online Customer Ratings	0.898			
Online Customer Reviews	0.996	0.964		
Product Photos	0.971	0.932	1.020	

Source: Data Processing Results using Smart-PLS 4.0 (2025)

The results indicate that several HTMT values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.90, suggesting potential overlap among certain constructs.

Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity

Composite reliability and convergent validity were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability (ρ_c), and average variance extracted (AVE). The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Composite Reliability and Average Extracted Variance

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability ρ_a	Composite Reliability ρ_c	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Customer Buying Interests	0.848	0.851	0.888	0.570
Online Customer Ratings	0.868	0.870	0.910	0.716
Online Customer Reviews	0.761	0.765	0.863	0.677
Product Photos	0.863	0.863	0.901	0.647

Source: Data Processing Results using Smart-PLS 4.0 (2025)

All constructs demonstrated adequate internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. In addition, AVE values for all constructs were above 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. The results of the path coefficient analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ($ O/STDEV $)	P values
Online Customer Ratings -> Customer Buying Interests	0.202	0.200	0.062	3.272	0.001
Online Customer Ratings -> Product Photos	0.406	0.406	0.047	8.645	0.000
Online Customer Reviews -> Customer Buying Interests	0.299	0.296	0.059	5.041	0.000
Online Customer Reviews -> Product Photos	0.511	0.512	0.042	12.131	0.000
Product Photos -> Customer Buying Interests	0.420	0.426	0.081	5.197	0.000

Source: Data Processing Results using Smart-PLS (2025)

The results indicate that online customer ratings significantly influence customer buying interest ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.05$) and product photos ($\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.001$). Online customer reviews also show a significant effect on customer buying interest ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$) and product photos ($\beta = 0.511$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, product photos significantly influence customer buying interest ($\beta = 0.420$, $p < 0.001$).

Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The coefficient of determination (R-square) was used to assess the explanatory power of the structural model. The R-square values are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Customer Buying Interests	0.748	0.746
Product Photos	0.752	0.751

Source: Data Processing Results using Smart-PLS 4.0 (2025)

The results show that the R-square value for Customer Buying Interest is 0.748, indicating that approximately 74.8% of the variance in customer buying interest is explained by the variables included in the research model. In addition, the R-square value for Product Photos is 0.752, suggesting that 75.2% of the variance in product photo perceptions is explained by the proposed model.

Effect Size (F-Square)

The effect size (f-square) was examined to assess the contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous variables. The results of the f-square analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. F-Square

	Customer Buying Interests	Online Customer Rating	Online Customer Review	Product Photos
Customer Buying Interests				
Online Customer Ratings	0.050			0.255
Online Customer Reviews	0.097			0.404
Product Photos	0.174			

Source: Data Processing Results using Smart-PLS 4.0 (2025)

Direct and Indirect Effects

The direct and indirect effects among the constructs were analyzed using a bootstrapping procedure. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Results Of Direct And Indirect Influence Tests

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standart Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Online Customer Ratings -> Customer Buying Interests	0.202	0.200	0.062	3.272	0.001
Online Customer Ratings -> Product Photos	0.406	0.406	0.047	8.645	0.000
Online Customer Reviews -> Customer Buying Interests	0.299	0.296	0.059	5.041	0.000
Online Customer Reviews -> Product Photos	0.511	0.512	0.042	12.131	0.000
Product Photos -> Customer Buying Interests	0.420	0.426	0.081	5.197	0.000
Online Customer Ratings -> Product Photos -> Customer Buying Interests	0,171	0,174	0,042	4,047	0,000
Online Customer Reviews -> Product Photos -> Customer Buying Interests	0,215	0,217	0,043	5,013	0,000

Source: Data Processing Results using Smart-PLS (2025)

The results indicate that all direct paths in the research model are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In addition, the indirect effects of online customer ratings and online customer reviews on customer buying interest through product photos are also statistically significant, indicating the presence of mediation effects.

DISCUSSIONS

The Influence of Online Customer Ratings on Purchase Intention

The results of this study demonstrate that *online customer ratings* have a positive and significant effect on *customer purchase intention* ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that higher star ratings provided by previous customers are associated with stronger intentions among potential buyers to purchase Camille Beauty products on TikTok Shop Live Streaming.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding can be explained through the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, where online customer ratings serve as external stimuli that trigger internal cognitive evaluations before manifesting in purchase intention as a behavioral response. In this context, numerical ratings act as heuristic cues that reduce perceived risk and provide social validation, enabling consumers to form evaluative judgments in the absence of direct product interaction. Drawing from social proof theory, observable cues such as star ratings function as normative signals that guide consumer behavior in online environments where uncertainty is prevalent (Cialdini, 2007).

Empirical evidence from prior research supports the current findings. For instance, (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006) found that aggregated ratings significantly affect consumer purchasing behavior in online marketplaces, as positive ratings increase perceived product quality and trust. Similarly, (Mudambi et al., 2014) reported that star ratings serve as credible evaluative information that enhances consumers' confidence in their purchase decisions. Another study by (Senecal & Nantel, 2004) found that product recommendations and ratings positively influence purchase intention by providing informational cues that simplify choice tasks.

In the Indonesian context, studies on e-commerce platforms echo this relationship. (Pramudita, 2024) reported that higher product ratings are positively associated with consumers' trust and repurchase intentions on

Shopee and Tokopedia, reinforcing the role of numerical cues in shaping online purchase decisions. These findings suggest that rating cues function consistently across different digital retail environments.

Importantly, the present study extends these insights to the social commerce context of TikTok Shop, where live streaming and interactive multimedia content may amplify the effects of rating cues. Unlike traditional e-commerce platforms, TikTok Shop integrates visual and social engagement features, yet the fundamental influence of ratings as heuristic signals remains significant. By confirming the positive effect of online customer ratings on purchase intention within this setting, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the robustness of rating cues across emerging commerce formats and highlights their continuing relevance in shaping consumer decisions in social commerce ecosystems.

The Influence of Online Customer Ratings on Product Photos

The results of this study indicate that *online customer ratings* have a positive and significant effect on consumers' perceptions of *product photos* ($\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that higher customer ratings enhance the perceived credibility, authenticity, and quality of product photos displayed during TikTok Shop live streaming of Camille Beauty products.

From a theoretical perspective, this relationship can be explained using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, where online customer ratings function as an external stimulus that shapes consumers' internal cognitive evaluations of visual information. In online shopping environments, consumers rarely evaluate product photos in isolation. Instead, they interpret visual cues through the lens of existing social information, such as ratings, which act as signals of collective consumer approval (Spence, 1973). High ratings reduce skepticism and encourage consumers to perceive product photos as accurate and trustworthy representations of the actual product.

This finding is also consistent with signaling theory, which posits that observable cues in information-asymmetric environments help consumers infer unobservable product quality. Online customer ratings operate as credibility signals that reinforce the reliability of visual content. When ratings are high, consumers are more likely to believe that product photos are realistic, not manipulated, and reflective of real product performance. Conversely, lower ratings may trigger doubt, leading consumers to interpret photos as potentially exaggerated or misleading.

Empirical evidence from previous studies supports this interpretation. (Ahn & Lee, 2024) found that higher customer ratings strengthen consumers' trust in visual product representations on digital marketplaces, suggesting that ratings function as validation mechanisms for visual cues. Similarly, (Filiari et al., 2018) reported that star ratings positively influence how consumers evaluate the authenticity and informativeness of product images in online retail platforms. These studies emphasize that ratings shape not only purchase decisions but also how consumers cognitively process visual marketing elements.

Furthermore, research by (Xu & Pratt, 2018) highlights the complementary relationship between numerical evaluations and visual information, arguing that user-generated signals such as ratings enhance the interpretive value of product visuals. In social commerce contexts, where visual content plays a dominant role, this interaction becomes even more critical. TikTok Shop live streaming combines real-time visuals with social feedback mechanisms, making ratings a powerful lens through which product photos are evaluated.

The present findings extend prior research by demonstrating that online customer ratings significantly influence perceptions of product photos in live-stream-based social commerce, a context that remains underexplored in existing literature. While previous studies have largely focused on traditional e-commerce platforms, this study confirms that ratings continue to play a pivotal role in shaping visual credibility even in highly interactive and entertainment-driven environments. Thus, this research contributes to the literature by highlighting the indirect visual-enhancing role of ratings, reinforcing the notion that social cues and visual cues work synergistically to shape consumer perceptions in digital commerce.

The Influence of Online Customer Reviews on Purchase Intention

The results of this study demonstrate that online customer reviews significantly and positively influence customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.299$; $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that textual reviews provided by previous customers play a crucial role in shaping consumers' willingness to purchase Camille Beauty products on TikTok Shop. Compared to numerical ratings, reviews offer more detailed, experience-based information that helps consumers evaluate product performance, suitability, and reliability before making a purchase decision.

From a theoretical perspective, this result is strongly supported by electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) theory, which posits that consumer-generated content functions as a persuasive informational cue in online environments. Online reviews reduce information asymmetry between sellers and buyers by providing experiential insights that are perceived as more credible than firm-generated content. Within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, online customer reviews act as an external stimulus that influences consumers' internal cognitive and affective evaluations (organism), ultimately leading to behavioral responses in the form of purchase intention.

This finding is consistent with extensive empirical evidence in prior research. Studies conducted across various e-commerce platforms have consistently reported that positive and informative online reviews significantly predict purchase intention, particularly in digital shopping environments where physical product inspection is not possible. For instance, (Filiari & McLeay, 2014) found that review credibility and usefulness significantly enhance consumers' trust and purchase intention in online settings. Similarly, (Cheung et al., 2008) demonstrated that online reviews influence consumer decisions by shaping perceived product quality and reducing perceived risk. These findings suggest that consumers rely heavily on peer evaluations when making online purchasing decisions.

In the context of social commerce, recent studies further emphasize the importance of reviews. Research by (Erkan & Evans, 2016) showed that e-WOM information quality and credibility significantly influence purchase intention through trust formation. Likewise, (Ismagilova et al., 2020) highlighted that detailed and experience-based reviews are particularly influential in social media-based commerce, where interpersonal interaction and community validation strengthen the persuasive power of reviews. The current study extends these findings by confirming that online customer reviews remain a dominant predictor of purchase intention within TikTok Shop Live Streaming, a platform characterized by real-time interaction and visually rich content.

This study contributes to the digital marketing and social commerce literature by reinforcing the role of online customer reviews as a central driver of purchase intention in live streaming-based e-commerce. While previous studies have primarily focused on traditional e-commerce platforms, the present findings provide empirical evidence that reviews continue to exert strong influence even in highly interactive and entertainment-oriented environments such as TikTok Shop. These results underscore the importance for brands like Camille Beauty to actively manage and encourage high-quality customer reviews, as they significantly shape consumer trust and purchasing decisions.

The Influence of Online Customer Reviews on Purchase Intention

The findings of this study indicate that online customer reviews significantly predict customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.299$; $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that consumers are more likely to develop purchase intentions when exposed to positive, informative, and credible reviews from previous buyers. Compared to numerical ratings, reviews provide richer, experience-based information that helps consumers evaluate product suitability, performance, and potential risks before making a purchase decision.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding is consistent with electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) theory, which posits that user-generated content such as online reviews functions as a persuasive information source in digital environments. Reviews reduce information asymmetry by providing first-hand usage experiences, thereby enhancing consumer confidence and lowering perceived risk. In online commerce settings, especially where physical product inspection is not possible, consumers rely heavily on reviews as diagnostic cues to support their decision-making process. This mechanism is particularly relevant in social commerce platforms, where peer opinions are highly visible and continuously updated.

Empirical evidence from prior studies strongly supports this relationship. (Xu & Pratt, 2018) demonstrated that detailed and experience-based online reviews significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions by enhancing perceived credibility and trust. Similarly, (Ahn & Lee, 2024) found that online reviews serve as influential informational cues that shape consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions in digital shopping contexts. Research conducted in Southeast Asian e-commerce markets also confirms that review valence and quality have a stronger impact on purchase intention than firm-generated promotional content, as consumers tend to perceive peer reviews as more authentic and less biased (Pramudita, 2024).

In the context of TikTok Shop Live Streaming, the influence of online customer reviews may be even more pronounced. Reviews not only inform consumers about product performance but also complement live product demonstrations by validating sellers' claims through shared user experiences. This interactive environment amplifies the persuasive power of reviews, as consumers can directly compare visual presentations with textual feedback from other buyers. Therefore, online customer reviews act as a critical stimulus that shapes internal evaluations and ultimately leads to stronger purchase intentions, as explained by the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework.

This study contributes to the digital marketing and social commerce literature by empirically confirming that online customer reviews remain a dominant determinant of purchase intention within live streaming-based commerce platforms. While previous studies primarily focused on conventional e-commerce platforms, this research extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that the persuasive effect of reviews persists and may even intensify in interactive, real-time shopping environments such as TikTok Shop.

The Mediating Role of Product Photos in the Relationship between Online Customer Reviews and Purchase Intention

The results of this study confirm that product photos significantly mediate the relationship between online customer reviews and customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.215$; $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that online customer reviews do not influence purchase intention solely through textual persuasion but also indirectly by shaping consumers' perceptions of product photos. In other words, positive and credible reviews enhance how consumers interpret and trust product visuals, which subsequently strengthens their intention to purchase.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding strongly supports the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. In this context, online customer reviews function as the stimulus, providing social and experiential information about the product. Product photos act as the organism, representing consumers' internal cognitive and emotional evaluations triggered by visual interpretation. Finally, purchase intention represents the response, reflecting consumers' behavioral tendency following the evaluation process. Reviews help consumers assess whether product photos accurately represent reality, thereby reinforcing emotional confidence and reducing perceived risk before purchasing (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

This mediating mechanism is also consistent with Cue Utilization Theory, which explains that consumers rely on multiple cues both intrinsic and extrinsic when evaluating products in online environments. Online customer reviews serve as verbal and experiential cues, while product photos function as visual cues. When reviews confirm that product photos are realistic, detailed, and consistent with actual product performance, consumers are more likely to perceive the visuals as credible and diagnostic. This combined cue effect strengthens trust and facilitates purchase intention (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

Empirically, this finding aligns with previous studies showing that user-generated content enhances the effectiveness of visual product information. (Xu & Pratt, 2018) demonstrated that online reviews increase the credibility of visual content by validating product representations shown to consumers. Similarly, (Al Gadri et al., 2025) found that positive online reviews amplify the persuasive power of product visuals by reducing uncertainty and strengthening perceived product authenticity. In social commerce settings, where consumers cannot physically inspect products, such synergy between reviews and visuals becomes even more critical.

Moreover, this result extends prior research by highlighting that the mediating role of product photos is particularly salient in live streaming-based social commerce platforms like TikTok Shop. Unlike traditional e-

commerce platforms, TikTok Shop emphasizes real-time interaction, visual storytelling, and immersive product presentation. In this environment, reviews not only inform consumers cognitively but also shape how live and static visuals are emotionally interpreted. This finding enriches digital marketing literature by demonstrating that product photos are not passive visual elements, but active mediators that translate social proof into behavioral intention.

Overall, this study contributes empirical evidence to the growing body of research on online consumer behavior by confirming that product photos serve as a crucial mechanism through which online customer reviews influence purchase intention. This finding reinforces the importance of integrating high-quality visual content with authentic and informative customer reviews to enhance consumer trust and purchasing outcomes in social commerce environments.

The Mediating Role of Product Photos in the Relationship between Online Customer Ratings and Purchase Intention

The results of this study confirm that product photos significantly mediate the relationship between online customer ratings and customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.171$; $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that online customer ratings do not only exert a direct influence on purchase intention, but also indirectly shape purchase intention through consumers' perceptions of product photos. In other words, the persuasive power of numerical ratings is strengthened when consumers are simultaneously exposed to convincing and credible product visuals.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding can be explained using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. Online customer ratings function as an external stimulus that provides evaluative information regarding product quality and credibility. Product photos act as the organism, representing consumers' internal visual and emotional interpretations of the product. These visual perceptions then trigger the response, manifested as purchase intention. High ratings create positive expectations, which influence how consumers interpret product photos, making them appear more trustworthy, authentic, and representative of actual product quality.

This mediating mechanism is also consistent with Cue Utilization Theory, which posits that consumers rely on multiple cues both extrinsic (ratings) and intrinsic or perceptual cues (visual appearance) to reduce uncertainty and evaluate product quality in online environments. When a product receives high ratings, consumers are more likely to interpret product photos as credible signals rather than mere promotional content. Previous studies have demonstrated that numerical ratings serve as quality signals that enhance consumers' trust in product information, thereby reinforcing the effectiveness of accompanying visual cues (Pramudita, 2024). Similarly, (Ahn & Lee, 2024) found that online rating information increases diagnosticity in consumer judgment, making visual elements more persuasive in shaping purchase-related decisions.

Empirical research in digital and social commerce contexts further supports this finding. Studies on visual information processing suggest that consumers interpret product visuals differently depending on the evaluative context provided by user-generated content, such as ratings and reviews. When evaluative cues are positive, visual information is perceived as more reliable and less misleading, which in turn enhances purchase intention (Kim et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant in TikTok Shop live streaming, where visual presentation is central and consumers rely heavily on rapid visual assessments combined with social proof cues.

The findings of this study enrich the existing literature by empirically demonstrating the mediating role of product photos in a social commerce environment, extending prior research that mainly examined direct effects of ratings on purchase intention. By integrating ratings and visual perception within the S–O–R framework, this study highlights that purchase intention in live-streaming commerce is shaped not by isolated cues, but by the interaction between evaluative signals and visual representations. This contribution is especially important in the context of TikTok Shop, where real-time visuals and user-generated signals coexist and jointly influence consumer decision-making.

The Mediating Role of Product Photos in the Relationship between Online Customer Reviews and Purchase Intention

The results of this study confirm that product photos significantly mediate the relationship between online customer reviews and customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.215$; $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that online customer reviews do not influence purchase intention solely through direct cognitive evaluation, but also indirectly by shaping consumers' perceptions of product photos. In other words, the impact of reviews on purchase intention becomes stronger when consumers perceive the product photos as credible, attractive, and representative of actual product quality.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding is strongly aligned with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. Online customer reviews act as stimuli, providing experiential and evaluative information derived from other consumers' usage experiences. These stimuli are then processed internally through the organism, represented by consumers' visual and emotional evaluations of product photos. When reviews consistently confirm that the visual appearance of the product matches real experience, consumers develop stronger confidence and positive affect toward the product visuals, which ultimately triggers the response in the form of purchase intention. This mechanism highlights that visual perception functions as an important psychological bridge between social information and behavioral outcomes.

Empirical evidence from prior studies supports this mediated relationship. Research on user-generated content has shown that reviews enhance the perceived diagnosticity and credibility of product information, particularly when textual reviews align with visual representations (Xu & Pratt, 2018). When consumers encounter reviews stating that product photos accurately reflect color, size, texture, or performance, they are more likely to trust the visual information and perceive the product as less risky. Similarly, studies in social commerce contexts suggest that reviews help consumers interpret and validate visual cues, strengthening the persuasive power of product images (Wang et al., 2022).

Compared to traditional e-commerce settings, this mediating effect becomes even more salient in TikTok Shop live streaming environments, where consumers are simultaneously exposed to reviews, ratings, and real-time visual content. The findings of this study extend previous literature by empirically demonstrating that product photos are not merely complementary elements, but play an active mediating role that amplifies the influence of online customer reviews on purchase intention. This contributes to the growing body of digital marketing literature by emphasizing the integration of textual and visual cues in shaping consumer behavior within live streaming-based social commerce.

From a practical perspective, these results imply that businesses, including Camille Beauty, should not treat reviews and product visuals as separate marketing components. Encouraging authentic customer reviews that explicitly confirm the accuracy of product photos—such as comments on color accuracy, texture, or real-life usage—can significantly strengthen consumers' trust and purchase intention. High-quality, realistic product photos that align with customer experiences are therefore essential in maximizing the persuasive impact of online reviews in TikTok Shop.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Online Customer Ratings, Online Customer Reviews, and Product Photos significantly influence Customer Purchase Intention on TikTok Shop, particularly in the context of Camille Beauty products. The results confirm that digital social cues and visual representations jointly play a crucial role in shaping consumer decision-making within a live streaming-based social commerce environment. Both Online Customer Ratings and Online Customer Reviews were found to directly and positively predict purchase intention, indicating that consumers rely heavily on peer-generated evaluations when making purchasing decisions under conditions of limited physical product inspection. In addition, Product Photos significantly influenced purchase intention and acted as a mediating variable, strengthening the effects of ratings and reviews on consumer buying interest.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework in the context of digital marketing and social commerce. Online Customer Ratings and Online Customer Reviews function as external stimuli that provide social and informational cues, Product Photos represent

the organism by translating these cues into cognitive and emotional evaluations, and Purchase Intention reflects the behavioral response. By empirically validating the mediating role of product photos, this research extends prior S–O–R–based studies by demonstrating how visual digital cues interact with textual and numerical information to influence consumer behavior in live commerce settings.

From a managerial perspective, the findings offer important implications for brands operating on TikTok Shop. First, companies should actively manage and monitor customer ratings and reviews, as these elements strongly shape consumer trust and purchase intention. Encouraging satisfied customers to provide authentic feedback and responding effectively to negative reviews can enhance perceived credibility. Second, brands should prioritize high-quality, realistic, and informative product photos, especially during live streaming sessions, as visual content amplifies the persuasive power of ratings and reviews. The integration of positive user-generated content with compelling visual presentations can significantly strengthen consumer confidence and purchasing decisions. For Camille Beauty, optimizing visual strategies and customer feedback management should be a core component of its digital marketing efforts on TikTok Shop.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research focused solely on Generation Z users and a single brand within one social commerce platform, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to adopt a longitudinal approach to examine changes in consumer behavior over time, expand the analysis across multiple platforms and product categories, and explore cross-cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital consumer behavior in social commerce environments.

Limitation

This study has several limitations.

1. The research sample was limited to TikTok Shop users who had participated in live streaming and were exposed to Camille Beauty products, so generalizing the results to other product categories or platforms requires caution.
2. The study used only a quantitative approach through questionnaires, so consumer perceptions and experiences were not explored in depth using qualitative methods.
3. The research variables focused on reviews, ratings, and product photos, while other factors such as price, promotions, or service quality were not included in the model despite their potential to influence purchase intention. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design cannot capture changes in consumer behavior over time. Future research is recommended to expand the platform context, add variables, and use mixed methods to generate a more comprehensive understanding.

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