

Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing as Drivers of Tiktok Shop Purchase Decisions: The Mediating Role of Brand Trust

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ABSTRACT

The growth of social commerce has transformed how consumers obtain product information, evaluate brands, and make purchasing decisions. This study examines the effects of content marketing and influencer marketing on purchase decisions, with brand trust as a mediating variable among TikTok Shop users. A quantitative approach was employed using questionnaire data from 277 students at four educational institutions in Pangkep Regency, Indonesia. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression and mediation analysis. The results show that content marketing and influencer marketing positively and significantly affect purchase decisions and brand trust. Brand trust positively and significantly influences purchase decisions. Mediation analysis confirms significant indirect effects of content marketing and influencer marketing on purchase decisions through brand trust, indicating partial mediation because the direct effects remain significant. These findings suggest that marketers should develop informative content, collaborate with influencers, and strengthen brand trust to improve consumer purchase decisions on social commerce platforms.

ABSTRAK

Pertumbuhan social commerce telah mengubah cara konsumen memperoleh informasi produk, mengevaluasi merek, dan membuat keputusan pembelian. Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh content marketing dan influencer marketing terhadap keputusan pembelian dengan brand trust sebagai variabel mediasi pada pengguna TikTok Shop. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan dengan data kuesioner dari 277 mahasiswa pada empat institusi pendidikan di Kabupaten Pangkep, Indonesia. Data dianalisis menggunakan regresi linear berganda dan analisis mediasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa content marketing dan influencer marketing berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keputusan pembelian dan brand trust. Brand trust juga berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keputusan pembelian. Analisis mediasi mengonfirmasi adanya pengaruh tidak langsung yang signifikan dari content marketing dan influencer marketing terhadap keputusan pembelian melalui brand trust, yang menunjukkan mediasi parsial karena pengaruh langsung tetap signifikan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pemasar perlu mengembangkan konten informatif, bekerja sama dengan influencer, dan memperkuat brand trust untuk meningkatkan keputusan pembelian konsumen pada platform social commerce digital.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The quick progress of digital technology has fundamentally changed the way companies communicate with consumers, create value, and carry out their business activities. Starting out with communication and entertainment, social media has now become an important channel for spreading product information, enabling consumer interaction, building relationships, and influencing purchasing behaviour (Fadly & Utama, 2020). Businesses can interact with consumers via interactive, user-generated environments on websites such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok (Azizah, 2021). It is because of this that the success of digital marketing today relies not just on reaching a wide audience but also on providing relevant information, promoting engagement, and establishing consumer confidence in such a highly competitive digital market place.

One of the major results of this change is the emergence of social commerce, a form that combines social interaction with electronic commerce. Different from traditional e-commerce, social commerce allows consumers to find products, obtain information, interact with other

users, get recommendations, consider alternative options, and make purchases all within the same social-media environment. This kind of integration modifies the usual consumer decision-making process since commercial information is seen together with entertainment, social interaction, reviews, recommendations and other user-generated content. Trust is particularly important in this situation since consumers often have to make decisions in the face of information asymmetry and uncertainty (Hajli et al., 2017; Burhanudin & Puspita, 2023).

TikTok represents a significant development in the field of social commerce. DataReportal reported that there were 126.8 million TikTok users who were 18 years old or older in Indonesia at the beginning of 2024, which amounted to 68.5% of the country's total number of internet users then. These figures show how widely the platform is used by Indonesian digital consumers (DataReportal, 2024). The launch of TikTok Shop in Indonesia in April 2021 contributed to this progress by bringing together within the TikTok environment short-form video content, interaction with creators, product discovery, and the ability to shop. Consequently, TikTok Shop provides a special setting in which consumers can move from being exposed to marketing content and recommendations from influencers to evaluating products and making a purchase all within a highly connected social-commerce context.

The extent to which this environment is commercially successful is mostly determined by how consumers react to the marketing stimuli available on the platform. One of the main forms of such stimulation is content marketing, which Pulizzi (2014) describes as a strategic method consisting of creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content in order to attract and keep a clearly identified audience and to encourage consumer action. On TikTok, content marketing includes product demonstrations, tutorials, educational material, storytelling, reviews, testimonials, and short promotional videos. This type of content both informs consumers and also provides entertainment and promotes engagement. Empirical studies have demonstrated that content marketing can have a significant impact on consumer responses and purchasing behaviour in both digital environments and in the context of TikTok (Mahardini et al., 2022; Tegar Mulya Aji R., 2023). Influencer marketing involves the use of people who already have a following on social media and who can affect their followers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours (Freberg et al., 2011). Influencers can give product recommendations, demonstrations, reviews, and share their personal experiences, which consumers tend to find more relatable than traditional advertising. Because of their perceived credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and authenticity, they can thus influence the way consumers evaluate a product. In social-commerce settings, influencers can also act as informational intermediaries by reducing uncertainty through the provision of product-related hints and personal opinions (Hudders & Lou, 2022; Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

Even though content marketing and influencer marketing can directly lead to consumer purchases, their impact might also be brought about through psychological mechanisms, particularly through brand trust. Brand trust refers to the confidence that consumers have in a brand's reliability and its ability to keep its promises. This trust is especially important in the case of online purchases, since consumers are unable to physically examine the products and have to rely on digital information, recommendations, reviews, and other clues before carrying out a transaction (Kim et al., 2008). Research concerning TikTok Shop and social commerce shows that trust is closely connected to purchasing behaviour and can be influenced by informational, social, and credibility-related factors (Burhanudin & Puspita, 2023; Kenang & Kasetty, 2024; Prestiyasih & Hati, 2025). Influencer marketing can be seen as the external stimuli that consumers come across in the TikTok Shop environment; brand trust is an internal

evaluative state by means of which consumers interpret these stimuli; and the purchase decision is the resulting behaviour. This framework offers a clear explanation of why marketing communication can affect purchasing decisions both directly and indirectly. Informational and relevant content can enhance consumers' confidence in the brand, while credible and authentic influencer recommendations can provide social cues that reduce uncertainty. Greater brand trust can then help move consumers from considering a product to making the purchase.

Even though research into digital marketing and TikTok Shop is growing, some significant gaps still exist. On the one hand, previous studies have looked at content marketing, influencer marketing, online reviews, and trust by combining different antecedents with various outcomes. For example, research carried out in Pekanbaru showed that both influencer and content marketing had a significant impact on consumer trust; yet their direct effects on purchase decisions were inconsistent, which suggests that the role of trust may vary from one context to another (Faoziyah et al., 2025). Other studies have examined trust as an intervening mechanism in connection with a number of predictors, such as informational support, emotional support, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth (Burhanudin & Puspita, 2023; Cahyani et al., 2026). Taken together, these findings show that the mechanisms through which digital marketing stimuli influence purchase decisions are dependent on the context and therefore need to be investigated further.

Second, since a great deal of the current evidence is concentrated on particular cities, certain product categories, or broad samples of Generation Z, there is a lack of understanding concerning university students in different regions. The Pangkep Regency, a regional market in South Sulawesi, houses students from a number of higher education institutions who use national social-commerce platforms but may face different local market conditions when compared to students in large metropolitan areas. It is therefore valuable to study the students in Pangkep not because of the uniqueness of the location, but because this allows the proposed mechanisms to be examined within a regional consumer context that has been less investigated.

Third, this study is not responsible for presenting content marketing, influencer marketing, or brand trust as new concepts. Instead, it makes a contribution to the existing literature by incorporating content marketing and influencer marketing as digital marketing stimuli, taking brand trust as the mediating factor and purchase decision as the behavioural outcome within the context of TikTok Shop's social-commerce platform. The fact that the empirical focus is on university students in Pangkep Regency also extends the geographical and consumer range of current research. Hence, the study's contribution is both relational and contextual in that it looks at how two common forms of TikTok marketing communication influence purchasing decisions via brand trust among a regional group of student consumers. The study looks at the effects of content marketing and influencer marketing on purchase decisions among users of TikTok Shop, with brand trust acting as a mediating variable. More specifically, the study investigates whether content marketing and influencer marketing have an impact on brand trust and purchase decisions, whether brand trust affects purchase decisions, and whether brand trust mediates the relationships between each of the marketing variables and purchase decisions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework is used here since environmental stimuli have an impact on an individual's internal state, which then results in a behavioural response (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Within this context, content marketing and influencer marketing are taken to be the digital marketing stimuli (S), brand trust represents the consumer's internal

evaluative state (O), and the purchase decision is the behavioural response (R). Thus, the framework offers a theoretical basis for looking at both the direct and indirect effects via brand trust.

Content marketing helps to build brand trust since consumers find the marketing information useful, relevant, consistent, and credible. On TikTok Shop, demonstrations that are informative, explanations that are clear, and stories that are authentic all serve to reduce consumers' uncertainty and enable them to form more favourable views of the brand. The greater the amount of exposure consumers have to content that matches their expectations, the more confidence they will place in the brand. Recent evidence shows that information relating to content plays a role in building trust in social commerce environments (Cahyani et al., 2026).

At the same time, influencer marketing affects brand trust by taking into account the influencers' perceived credibility, expertise, authenticity, and the degree of similarity between them and their followers. Consumers regard the influencers' detailed and credible information about a product as social cues which help to reduce uncertainty. Studies on influencer marketing stress the importance of credibility and trust in influencing consumers' reactions to products (Hudders & Lou, 2022; Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

Content marketing influences the way customers make purchases by enhancing their knowledge of the product, their attention, the perception of its relevance, and the way in which they assess different alternatives. Since TikTok makes use of a short-form video format, marketers are able to quickly and visually show product features, thus decreasing the amount of time consumers spend looking for information. Earlier research on TikTok has found significant relationships between content marketing and purchasing decisions (Mahardini et al., 2022; Fristamara et al., 2024).

Influencers have an impact on people's decisions about what to buy by providing recommendations that are seen as credible, relatable, and socially validated. On TikTok Shop this effect is even more noticeable since the influencers' content is directly linked to the product pages and to the chance of a transaction. Research has demonstrated that the credibility and trust associated with influencers affect how consumers respond to purchases in social-commerce situations (Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

In contrast, brand trust decreases the level of perceived uncertainty and makes consumers more confident that a product or seller will fulfill expectations. This factor is particularly important in the context of social commerce, since consumers are not able to physically inspect the products before buying. Evidence from TikTok Shop indicates that trust has a positive relationship with purchasing behaviour and purchase intention (Burhanudin & Puspita, 2023; Prestyasih & Hati, 2025).

Content marketing and influencer marketing affect people's decisions to make a purchase by helping to build trust in the brand, as consumers don't just look at the promotional messages but also take the brand's credibility and reliability into account. The more informative and consistent the content is, the greater amount of confidence consumers place in the brand. In the same way, recommendations from credible influencers give social validation and help to reduce uncertainty. When trust has been established, consumers are more likely to change their positive views into actual purchases. Previous research into social commerce has demonstrated that trust plays a mediating role in the effect of digital information and social signals on purchasing outcomes (Burhanudin & Puspita, 2023; Cahyani et al., 2026).

Therefore, based on the relationships explained above, the hypotheses proposed in this study is as follows:

- H1: Content marketing has a positive and significant impact on brand trust.
- H2: Headline: Influencer marketing has a positive and significant impact on brand trust.
- H3: Content marketing has a positive and significant influence on customers' decisions regarding their purchases.
- H4: Influencer marketing has a positive and significant impact on customers' decisions about whether to make a purchase.
- H5: Brand trust has a positive and significant influence on customers' decisions regarding their purchases.
- H6: The trust that a brand has serves as a mediator in the relationship between content marketing and purchase decisions.
- H7: The trust that consumers have in a brand acts as a mediator in the relationship between influencer marketing and their decision to make a purchase.

3. METHODS

In order to investigate the relationships between content marketing, influencer marketing, brand trust, and purchase decisions, a quantitative explanatory research design was used. The data were gathered from active students at four higher education institutions in Pangkep Regency: Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Pangkep, STKIP Pangkep, STAI DDI Pangkep, and Akademi Kebidanan Aisyah Pangkep. To be included in the study, the respondents had to satisfy two conditions: they had to be active students and also users of TikTok Shop. The responses were assessed on a five-point Likert scale, going from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.1 Population, sampling, and the allocation of the sample

The number of participants was 2,773 active students studying at four higher education institutions in Pangkep Regency, Indonesia. Since the research was concerned with the purchasing behaviour of users of TikTok Shop, the respondents selected were students who fulfilled certain eligibility conditions: namely, that they were currently students, had used TikTok Shop, and had made at least one purchase on the platform. Those individuals who met all of these requirements and who completed the questionnaire were included in the analysis.

To select the respondents who had direct experience relevant to the research variables, a non-probability purposive sampling method was used. Purposive sampling is appropriate in the case where participants are chosen on the basis of specific characteristics that match the research aims. This method made it possible to ensure that all the respondents had direct experience of TikTok Shop, not just being ordinary social media users.

277 responses which were both eligible and usable were obtained and incorporated into the analysis. The sample size was considered to be adequate for the intended multiple regression and mediation analyses. Since there were three predictors in the main purchase-decision model, the sample size was greater than the minimum required for multiple regression and thus offered sufficient statistical power to estimate the relationships proposed between content marketing, influencer marketing, brand trust, and purchase decision.

The way the respondents were distributed among the four institutions matched the real number of eligible and completed responses secured during the data collection process. Since purposive sampling was used, the distribution could not be considered one based on proportional probability. The distribution obtained is given in Table1.

Table 1. Population and Achieved Sample Allocation

Institution	Population	Achieved sample
Akademi Kebidanan Aisyah Pangkep	22	18
STAI DDI Pangkep	331	77
STKIP Pangkep	735	88
Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Pangkep	1,685	94
Total	2,773	277

Source : Research data, 2025

3.2 Instrument quality and the classical statistical assumptions

Before carrying out the hypothesis testing, the questionnaire was assessed in terms of item validity and internal consistency. The regression analyses were checked for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. In the manuscript, item-level validity coefficients, Cronbach's alpha values for each construct, and the assumption-test statistics from the original statistical output are given.

The statistical results from the data file that had been uploaded were incorporated into the analysis. Using IBM SPSS Statistics version 20, data from 277 respondents were analysed and the following results are taken from the given statistical tables and figures.

Validity test

In the validity test, all of the items on the questionnaire showed validity since each item's correlation was higher than the r-table value of 0.118 at the 5 per cent level of significance. The Content Marketing construct included six items (with correlations ranging from 0.882 to 0.909), the Influencer Marketing construct had eight items (with correlations between 0.822 and 0.871), Brand Trust consisted of seven items (with correlations from 0.821 to 0.888), and Purchase Decision had six items (with correlations from 0.844 to 0.859).

Table 2. Item Validity Results

Construct	Items	r-count range	r-table	Decision
Content Marketing	6	0.882–0.909	0.118	All valid
Influencer Marketing	8	0.822–0.871	0.118	All valid
Brand Trust	7	0.821–0.888	0.118	All valid
Purchase Decision	6	0.844–0.859	0.118	All valid

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

Reliability test

We first examined the validity of the items and then carried out a reliability test in order to evaluate the internal consistency of the items for each construct. Cronbach's alpha (α) was taken as the reliability coefficient, and the higher the value of Cronbach's alpha, the greater the consistency among the items measuring the same construct. Table 3 gives the reliability coefficients for the four constructs.

Table 3. Reliability Results

Construct	Cronbach's α	Decision
Content Marketing	0.953	Highly reliable
Influencer Marketing	0.945	Highly reliable
Brand Trust	0.942	Highly reliable
Purchase Decision	0.923	Highly reliable

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The findings show that all four constructs have a high degree of internal consistency, the Cronbach's alpha values lying between 0.923 and 0.953. This suggests that the items for each construct consistently measure the relevant variables. Hence, the instrument was regarded as reliable enough for the later statistical analyses.

Normality test

We performed a normality test to determine whether the regression model residuals followed an approximately normal distribution. Because the study employed two regression models, normality was examined separately for the Brand Trust model and the Purchase Decision model. We used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, with a p-value greater than 0.05 indicating that the residual distribution does not significantly deviate from normality. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Tests

Regression model	N	K-S Z	p-value	Conclusion
Content Marketing + Influencer Marketing → Brand Trust	277	0.611	0.849	Normal
Content Marketing + Influencer Marketing + Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	277	0.877	0.425	Normal

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

Table 4 shows that the p-values for both regression models are higher than 0.05 (the values are $p = 0.849$ and $p = 0.425$ respectively). This means that the null hypothesis of normality cannot be rejected, so we can conclude that the residuals from both regression models are normally distributed.

Multicollinearity test

The multicollinearity test was conducted to determine whether high correlations among the independent variables could distort regression coefficient estimates. We assessed multicollinearity using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. A tolerance value above 0.10 and a VIF value below 10 indicate that multicollinearity is not a serious concern. Table 5 presents the multicollinearity assessment results for the two regression models.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Model / Predictor	Tolerance	VIF	Conclusion
Content Marketing → Brand Trust	0.979	1.022	No multicollinearity
Influencer Marketing → Brand Trust	0.979	1.022	No multicollinearity
Content Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.693	1.444	No multicollinearity
Influencer Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.874	1.145	No multicollinearity
Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	0.676	1.478	No multicollinearity

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The results indicate that all tolerance values are above 0.10, while all VIF values are substantially below 10. The VIF values range from 1.022 to 1.478, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in either regression model. Therefore, the predictor variables can be simultaneously included in the regression analysis.

Heteroscedasticity test

The heteroscedasticity test assessed whether the variance of the regression residuals remained constant across predicted values. The assessment was based on the residual

scatterplots for both regression models. The absence of a systematic pattern, such as a funnel, wave, or concentration of residuals, indicates that the assumption of homoscedasticity is satisfied. Table 6 summarises the results of the visual assessment.

Table 6. Heteroscedasticity Assessment

Regression model	Assessment	Conclusion
Content Marketing + Influencer Marketing → Brand Trust	Residual scatterplot randomly dispersed around zero	No heteroscedasticity
Content Marketing + Influencer Marketing + Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	Residual scatterplot randomly dispersed around zero	No heteroscedasticity

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The scatterplots show that the residuals are randomly distributed around the zero line, with no clear systematic pattern. This indicates that the residual variance is relatively constant and that heteroscedasticity was not detected in either regression model.

Regression Model fit

After assessing instrument quality and classical assumptions, the overall significance and explanatory power of the regression models were evaluated. The F-test determined whether the predictors jointly explain a statistically significant proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. In addition, we examined R^2 and adjusted R^2 to assess each model's explanatory power. Table 7 presents the model fit results and overall F-tests.

Table 7. Model Fit and Overall F-Test

Model	SS Regression	SS Residual	SS Total	df	Mean Square	F	p	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Content Marketing + Influencer Marketing → Brand Trust	—	—	—	2, 274	—	65.520	<0.001	≈0.323	≈0.318
Content Marketing + Influencer Marketing + Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	766.890	1651.168	2418.058	3, 273, 276	255.630 / 6.048	42.265	<0.001	0.317	0.310

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The F-test shows that both of the regression models are statistically significant. The first model – this being the one with Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing as predictors of Brand Trust – is significant ($F = 65.520$, $p < 0.001$). In a similar way, the second model, which uses Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Brand Trust as predictors of Purchase Decision, is also significant ($F = 42.265$, $p < 0.001$).

In the Purchase Decision model, an R^2 value of 0.317 shows that Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Brand Trust together account for about 31.7% of the variation in

Purchase Decision. An adjusted R^2 of 0.310 means that about 31.0% of the variation is still accounted for when allowance is made for the number of predictors in the model

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

Regression analysis is used in order to look at the effects of content marketing, influencer marketing, and brand trust on customers' purchase decisions. The analysis offers evidence for the direct relationships that are specified in the research model and at the same time shows the contribution of each predictor to the dependent variable, with the impact of the other variables being taken into account. The regression coefficients that have been estimated are given in Table 8.

Table 8. Multiple Regression Coefficients for Purchase Decision

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.298	1.335	—	0.223	0.824
Content marketing	0.288	0.047	—	6.190	<0.001
Influencer marketing	0.204	0.039	—	5.272	<0.001
Brand trust	0.178	0.056	—	3.156	0.002

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

Table 8 shows that Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Brand Trust each have a positive and statistically significant relationship with Purchase Decision. The coefficient for Content Marketing is positive ($B = 0.288$, $\beta = 0.320$, $p < 0.001$), which means that the higher the level of content marketing, the higher the purchase decision scores. Similarly, Influencer Marketing has a positive and significant effect ($B = 0.204$, $\beta = 0.256$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, Brand Trust also has a positive effect on Purchase Decision ($B = 0.178$, $\beta = 0.313$, $p = 0.002$).

The standardised coefficients indicate that Content Marketing has the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.320$), followed by Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.313$), and finally Influencer Marketing ($\beta = 0.256$). The findings reveal that, in this sample, the quality and relevance of marketing content play a special role in influencing students' purchasing decisions on TikTok Shop.

The estimated regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = 0.298 + 0.288X_1 + 0.204X_2 + 0.178M + \varepsilon$$

The Y represents Purchase Decision, X_1 represents Content Marketing, X_2 represents Influencer Marketing, and M represents Brand Trust.

To assess whether the three predictors jointly explain a significant proportion of the variation in Purchase Decision, we then conducted an overall F-test. Table 9 presents the model summary and F-test results.

Table 9. Model Summary and Overall F-Test

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df1	df2	p
$X_1, X_2, M \rightarrow Y$	≈0.563	≈0.317	≈0.310	42.265	3	273	<0.001

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

Table 9 shows that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 42.265$, $p < 0.001$), which means that Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Brand Trust together account for Purchase Decision. The model explains about 31.7% of the variance in Purchase Decision, the adjusted R^2 being about 31.0%. The rest of the variation could be due to factors that are not included in the current research model.

The relationship between content marketing and brand trust

Then, to examine the first stage of the proposed mediation model, we conducted a separate regression analysis to determine whether Content Marketing significantly predicts Brand Trust. This analysis tests whether the marketing content TikTok Shop users encounter is associated with the development of trust in the relevant brand. Table 10 presents the results.

Table 10. Regression of Content Marketing on Brand Trust

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	6.618	0.993	—	6.663	<0.001
Content marketing	0.698	0.044	0.692	15.878	<0.001

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The findings show that Content Marketing has a positive and statistically significant impact on Brand Trust ($B = 0.698$, $\beta = 0.692$, $t = 15.878$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that those respondents who think TikTok Shop content is more informative, relevant, engaging, or persuasive are likely to express higher levels of trust.

The result supports H1, the hypothesis which states that Content Marketing has a positive effect on Brand Trust; moreover, the relatively high standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.692$) shows that Content Marketing is a significant antecedent of Brand Trust in this study context.

The relationship between influencer marketing and brand trust

A second regression analysis assessed whether Influencer Marketing contributes to brand trust. This analysis matters because influencers can serve as socially visible sources of product information and recommendations, potentially reducing consumers' uncertainty when evaluating products promoted through TikTok Shop.

Table 11. Regression of Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	5.482	1.171	—	4.680	<0.001
Influencer marketing	0.748	0.052	0.656	14.428	<0.001

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

Table 11 shows that Influencer Marketing has a positive and statistically significant impact on Brand Trust ($B = 0.748$, $\beta = 0.656$, $t = 14.428$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that influencer communication is linked to higher levels of brand trust among the respondents. The findings support H2; the relatively large standardized coefficient indicates that influencer characteristics and how they communicate can substantially shape consumers' perceptions of the credibility of the brand being promoted and their trust in it.

The relationship between brand trust and purchase decision

The next analysis examines whether Brand Trust is directly associated with Purchase Decision. Establishing this relationship matters because the proposed mediation model assumes that trust is the psychological mechanism through which digital marketing stimuli shape consumers' purchasing responses.

Table 12. Regression of Brand Trust on Purchase Decision

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	6.917	0.961	—	7.199	<0.001
Brand trust	0.702	0.043	0.703	16.375	<0.001

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The results demonstrate that Brand Trust has a positive and statistically significant effect on Purchase Decision ($B = 0.702$, $\beta = 0.703$, $t = 16.375$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, respondents who express greater confidence in a brand tend to demonstrate stronger purchase decision tendencies. The result supports H5 and indicates that Brand Trust is an important psychological factor underlying purchase decisions in the TikTok Shop context.

Direct effect in the mediation model

The relationships between the various individual variables were established and then the mediation model was examined by including Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Brand Trust all as predictors of Purchase Decision. The analysis looked at whether the two digital marketing variables still have significant direct effects on Purchase Decision when Brand Trust is incorporated into the model.

Table 13. Direct Effects in the Mediation Model

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	1.765	1.025	—	1.722	0.086
Content marketing	0.323	0.056	0.320	5.791	<0.001
Influencer marketing	0.292	0.060	0.256	4.849	<0.001
Brand trust	0.313	0.056	0.313	5.549	<0.001

Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The results indicate that Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Brand Trust remain positive and statistically significant predictors of Purchase Decision when entered simultaneously into the mediation model. Content Marketing has the largest standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0.320$), followed by Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.313$) and Influencer Marketing ($\beta = 0.256$).

These results support H3, H4, and H5. More importantly, the continued significance of the direct effects of Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing after including Brand Trust provides preliminary evidence that Brand Trust may function as a partial mediator rather than a full mediator.

To determine whether Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Content Marketing and Purchase Decision, and between Influencer Marketing and Purchase Decision, we examined the indirect effects using the Sobel test. Table 14 reports the relevant path coefficients and standard errors.

Mediation analysis

Table 14. Sobel Mediation Results

Indirect pathway	a	SEa	b	SEb	Sobel Z	p	Conclusion
Content marketing → Brand trust → Purchase decision	0.698	0.044	0.313	0.056	5.27	<0.001	Significant mediation

Influencer marketing → Brand trust → Purchase decision	0.748	0.052	0.313	0.056	5.21	<0.001	Significant mediation
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Source: Data Proceed, 2026

The Sobel test results indicate that Brand Trust significantly mediates the relationship between Content Marketing and Purchase Decision ($Z = 5.27$, $p < 0.001$). Brand Trust also significantly mediates the relationship between Influencer Marketing and Purchase Decision ($Z = 5.21$, $p < 0.001$). Accordingly, H6 and H7 are supported.

The findings suggest that digital marketing activities do not influence purchase decisions solely through direct persuasion. Instead, part of their influence operates through the development of consumers' confidence in the promoted brand. The significant direct effects observed in the previous regression model, together with the significant indirect effects, are consistent with a partial mediation mechanism.

4.2 Discussion

The results indicate that content marketing has a positive effect on both brand trust and purchase decisions, the influence on brand trust being especially notable as the regression shows ($\beta = 0.692$). One possible explanation for this is that TikTok content gives rise to repeated and specific product hints via demonstrations, tutorials, reviews, and storytelling. When such content is perceived as informative and relevant, students may find that their uncertainty about the information decreases and that they become more confident in the brand being promoted. This explanation is in line with the well-documented role of information credibility in the building of trust within social-commerce environments (Tseng, 2023).

Influencer marketing has a major effect on both brand trust and consumers' decisions to make purchases. The positive correlation with trust ($\beta = 0.656$) shows that the messages sent by influencers act as a social signal. When evaluating a product, students take into account not just the information about the product but also the communicator's perceived credibility, expertise, authenticity, and similarity. This interpretation is in line with research which indicates that influencer credibility and trust are important factors in consumers' responses to social commerce (Hudders & Lou, 2022; Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

Content marketing has a higher standardised coefficient than influencer marketing in the direct regression used to predict purchase decisions (0.320 compared with 0.256). The fact that it has the higher coefficient should not be interpreted as evidence that content marketing is in general more effective than influencer marketing. On the contrary, when both variables are considered, respondents' purchase decisions are more closely tied to the information provided and the relevance of the content. One possible explanation is that TikTok Shop customers need specific product information – such as details about the product features, demonstrations, usage instructions, and reviews – in order to reduce uncertainty prior to making a purchase. Although influencers are able to attract attention and offer social validation, consumers may still require adequate product information before reaching a final purchase decision.

The mediation study's findings offer additional insight into the way trust is developed and then leads to purchasing behaviour. Content marketing appears to build trust by giving out regular and useful information, whereas influencer marketing achieves trust through credibility

and the sense of authenticity. Once trust has been obtained, consumers are more likely to convert their positive opinions into actual purchases. This finding is in line with the evidence that trust is a key factor in purchasing behaviour on TikTok Shop and in social commerce (Burhanudin & Puspita, 2023; Prestiyasih & Hati, 2025).

The fact that the study takes place in Pangkep is significant since the respondents were students from a number of higher education institutions in that part of Indonesia. The study does not claim that students in Pangkep are different from students in other areas, because no such comparison has been carried out; rather, it provides empirical evidence concerning a regional consumer group which has until now been poorly represented in the existing literature. The findings indicate that the digital mechanisms identified in broader research on TikTok and social commerce—such as informative content, credible recommendations, and trust—are also applicable to the students in this sample.

One should be careful about drawing conclusions from these findings. The study makes use of purposive sampling and is based on self-reported cross-sectional data, so any claims regarding causality and the degree to which the results can be generalised are restricted. Moreover, the study does not directly examine influencer credibility, content quality, perceived risk, price, product quality, or trust in the platform. As these factors might lead to additional variation in purchasing decisions, they should be investigated in future research.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings indicate that both content marketing and influencer marketing are positively and significantly related to the purchase decisions of the users in the sample and that they also have a significant effect on brand trust, this trust in turn having a significant impact on purchase decisions. A mediation analysis has revealed that brand trust plays a significant role in the relationships between content marketing and purchase decisions as well as in those between influencer marketing and purchase decisions. The results are in line with a partial mediation model since the direct effects are still significant when brand trust is taken into account.

The key theoretical contribution of this study is to combine content marketing and influencer marketing as digital marketing stimuli, with brand trust serving as the mediating mechanism and the purchase decision as the behavioural response within the context of TikTok Shop's social commerce. Furthermore, the study provides empirical evidence based on university students in Pangkep Regency, a regional area of Indonesia that has so far been inadequately represented in the existing literature. Thus, the research promotes the field of social commerce without asserting that the individual constructs are new.

For people who are engaged in marketing, the findings indicate that their strategies on TikTok Shop should not limit themselves to merely attracting attention. The content they create should contain clear, relevant and trustworthy information about the product, and when working with influencers they should concentrate on credibility, authenticity and the relevance of the influencers to the target audience. The adoption of these approaches should be supported by actions which help to build brand trust, such as giving transparent product information, keeping up consistent communication, making sure that deliveries are reliable, and providing genuine customer reviews.

Future research should employ bigger and more varied samples, compare consumers in different regions with those in metropolitan areas, and take into account further factors such as perceived risk, price, product quality, online customer reviews, platform trust, and purchase intention. Furthermore, in later studies, where this is possible, longitudinal or experimental

designs should be used and bootstrap-based mediation or SEM-PLS methods should be applied in order to gain more reliable evidence regarding the indirect effects.

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