FROM COMMENTS TO CART: THE ROLE OF COMMENTS ON PURCHASE DECISION PROCESS ON TIKTOK

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Abstract: Comments on social media, especially on the TikTok platform, have become an important factor influencing the online purchasing decision-making process. This research aims to analyze the role of comments on TikTok in each stage of the consumer purchasing decision making process. The method used was a survey via Google Forms and analyzed using content analysis techniques. Respondents from this research involved active TikTok users in Indonesia aged 18 to 30 years old. The research results show that comments have a significant role in all stages of purchasing decisions, from   need recognition to post-purchase. In the need recognition stage, comments help consumers realize their needs. Next, in the information search and alternative evaluation stage, comments provide insight into product quality, user experience, and help consumers compare one product option with another. After that, at the intention recognition stage, comments reinforce the consumer's confidence to add the product to the shopping cart while at the purchase stage, comments reinforce the consumer's final confidence to make a purchase and in the post-purchase stage, comments become a medium to share a beneficial experience for other potential buyers. This research confirms that comments on TikTok are not just feedback, but also a tool capable of influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions.

INTRODUCTION

With its rapid user growth, TikTok has emerged as one of the most significant social media platforms in recent years (businessofapps, 2024). As of July 2023, TikTok had approximately 1.5 billion monthly active users worldwide (Statista, 2024). In addition to being a means of entertainment, the app serves as a powerful marketing tool for companies and brands. TikTok's signature features, such as its customized "For You Page" algorithm and short, digestible videos, have revolutionized the way people shop and make purchasing decisions (Absolute Digital Media, 2024).

The phenomenon known as "TikTok Made Me Buy It" shows how viral content on this platform, especially among Generation Z, can have a major impact on consumer decisions (Absolute Digital Media, 2024). Sprout Social, 2024 data shows that up to 55% of users, compared to 46% of Instagram users and 45% of Facebook users, made an impulse purchase after seeing a product on TikTok. The four elements that influence customer behavior when making purchases include cultural, social, psychological, and personality aspects (Kotler and Armstrong, 2011). TikTok utilizes social, psychological, and personality aspects by producing visually and emotionally attractive content that can arouse users' needs and desires that they did not realize before (Montag et al, 2021).

Comments on TikTok videos play an important role as they can shape perceptions and influence purchasing behavior, turning casual customers into potential buyers. Zhang et al. (2022) stated that consumers' purchase intentions on social e-commerce platforms are strongly influenced by the quality of arguments in online reviews (systematic factors), the credibility of the source, and the perceived quantity of reviews (heuristic factors). Although TikTok was not originally an e-commerce platform, the integration of features such as TikTok Shop has transformed it into a vibrant social e-commerce space. The strong social proof in the form of comments left by TikTok users who have purchased or used the product is a key factor in triggering impulse purchase behavior and turning passive viewers into active buyers.

Consumer online purchasing decisions are the information search and decision-making behaviors that consumers carry out when purchasing products or services through e-commerce platforms (Bo et al., 2023). Before choosing to buy a product or service, consumers tend to go through a number of stages in this process. According to Petcharat and Leelasantitham (2021), the stages of the online purchasing decision process include need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, intention recognition, purchase, and post-purchase. The consumer need recognition stage begins when they realize a desire or need that needs to be met, either through internal stimuli such as hunger, or external stimuli such as advertisements or recommendations from others. Chen et al. (2018) emphasized the important role of social media in this process, where product recommendations influence both planning and impulsive consumers.

Furthermore, the information search stage where consumers will search on social media and social networking sites (SNS), which are considered more reliable (Lestari and Gunawan, 2021; Luciano and Agustini, 2024). Continuous information search on social media can influence purchase intention (Kwakye et al., 2024). Social media comments play an important

role as a source of information, a trust-building tool, and a way to reduce the risk of online shopping. Then moving on to the alternative evaluation stage, this stage involves the process by which consumers evaluate different products using the information they have gathered (Sampouw and Wulandari, 2020). Lestari and Gunawan (2021) emphasize that the recommendations, suggestions, and feedback that potential buyers receive from a lot of information have an impact on purchase intention. This evaluation process involves online shopping, where comments and reviews on e-commerce platforms and social media become one of the keys for consumers to compare and select products before the final decision.

After evaluating alternatives, consumers move to the intention recognition stage where consumers will indicate their purchase intention by placing the product into the shopping cart feature. Wijayanti's research (2021) shows that positive comments from other users can boost sales by fostering consumer confidence, while negative comments can lead to a decrease in sales or even a loss of buying interest. Interestingly, according to a study by Cheung et al. (2014), at this point consumers are usually more affected by negative information than positive which has a strong impact on purchase intentions. This emphasizes that effective online reputation management is crucial for companies as information from social media comments, especially negative ones, can significantly affect consumers' perceptions and their purchasing decisions. The next stage is purchase, where consumers complete the transaction to get the desired product or service. The concept of "comment to cart" emphasizes that user comments and reviews on online platforms can influence consumers' perception of products. This relates to the concept of social proof, where individuals tend to follow the actions or opinions of others in situations of uncertainty (Nikmah and Zaida, 2022). Social proof, such as interactions, reviews, and recommendations from users have a great impact on businesses (Nikmah and Zaida, 2022).

Finally, the post-purchase stage includes reviewing products or services, providing feedback, recommending products to others, and even requesting returns if the product does not meet their expectations. At this point, comments made on social media have a significant impact in shaping perceptions and making purchasing decisions for potential buyers. Consumers who are satisfied with the products or services they buy will tend to share their positive experiences on social media (Salsabila and Paranita, 2021), leaving a digital footprint that serves as a useful source of information for potential buyers (Peltier et al., 2020). Therefore, comments are very important to research because they have a great impact in

influencing users' product purchasing decisions and in increasing sales (Aprilianne and Agustini, 2024).

Aprilianne and Agustini (2024) categorize comments into neutral, negative, and positive, each of these types of comments provides a different perspective on customer experience and perception. This categorization helps explain how different types of comments contribute to the consumer decision-making process. Positive comments, as Kartika and Ganarsih (2019) explain, serve as testimonials that increase potential customers' trust and strengthen brand image. On the other hand, Wijayanti (2021) asserts that negative comments, while potentially harmful, serve as valuable feedback for product and service improvements. Meanwhile, Jumeilah (2018) describes neutral comments as questions that reflect customer curiosity and provide opportunities for companies to provide in-depth information.

In the ever-evolving digital marketing landscape, Brilliantia et al. (2022) emphasized that comment analysis is one of the most effective tools to measure the success of social media marketing strategies. By understanding and utilizing the data obtained from these different types of comments, companies can modify their approach, increase consumer engagement, and ultimately drive business growth in this digital era. This phenomenon reaffirms the importance of consumer comments as a reliable and preferred source of information in the decision-making process, positioning them as a vital element in contemporary digital marketing strategies.

Leong et al. (2022) underline the importance of communication interactions in shaping consumer purchasing behavior. Answering questions and exchanging experiences in the comments section create interactions that help users feel more confident about their purchase and encourage users to press the "Add to Cart" button more quickly. The study by Nur Rizqi Febriandika et al. (2023) revealed that impulse purchases on TikTok are strongly influenced by sales promotions and brand reviews, where positive comments can encourage consumers to make purchases quickly. Therefore, TikTok comments not only offer more information but also foster an environment that encourages quick and impulsive purchases, and often pressure users to immediately buy the products they see.

While previous research has explored the impact of online reviews on the purchase decision process, the specific role of TikTok comments in the purchase decision process is still not fully understood. The "From Comment to Cart" phenomenon highlights a significant shift in digital consumer behavior, where the purchase decision process is becoming more social, interactive and integrated with everyday entertainment experiences. This knowledge gap hinders our understanding of how comments influence the consumer journey from product

discovery to purchase on these platforms. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of TikTok comments in influencing consumers' purchase decision process. A better understanding of these dynamics will provide valuable insights for marketers on how to harness the power of social engagement on TikTok for more effective marketing strategies, as well as contribute to the growing literature on social commerce and digital consumer behavior.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a survey method to analyze the role of TikTok comments in influencing the consumer purchasing decision process. The survey method was chosen because it allows researchers to collect various information about respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the influence of TikTok comments on purchasing decisions (Maidana, 2021). The population in this study are TikTok users in Indonesia. Because the population is large and cannot be determined with certainty, a sample is used. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling method with the criteria that active TikTok users aged 18-30 years. This age range was chosen because this group dominates TikTok users in Indonesia, where the platform reached 64.8 percent of all adults aged 18 and over in early 2024 (Datareportal, 2024). The sample size in this study was 70 respondents. This sample size was determined based on several considerations, namely limited time in conducting research, limited research costs, and respondents' willingness to answer the questionnaires given, and answers that would tend to be monotonous so that sampling was stopped at 70, and this number exceeded the minimum sampling standard of 30 respondents (Sugiyono, 2018). Taking into account the limited time and resources of researchers, the number of 70 respondents allows data collection and processing to be carried out effectively and accurately.

Data collection was conducted online to various social media platforms and online community networks through Google Forms to ensure accessibility for respondents and efficiency in the data collection process. The questionnaire consists of two parts, namely (1) Respondent Profile and (2) The Role of Comments in the Purchase Decision Process, which includes six stages: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, intention recognition, purchase, and post-purchase. Each stage includes a combination of open and closed questions designed to comprehensively explore the role of TikTok comments in each stage of the consumer purchase decision process. Closed-ended questions were presented in multiple-choice format, while open-ended questions provided space for answers in the form of paragraphs of explanation.

In this study, data analysis was conducted by combining descriptive statistics and content analysis. This analysis aims to find out whether respondents tend to choose or the majority state that TikTok comments play a role in each stage of the purchase decision, which is seen from the frequency distribution of answers. Meanwhile, data from open-ended questions were analyzed using the content analysis method. According to Anugraheni et al. (2023), content analysis is a systematic approach to identifying and analyzing text content, whether in the form of writing, speech, or visuals, in order to understand certain themes or patterns. In this study, content analysis is applied to evaluate the extent to which TikTok comments contribute to each stage of the purchase decision. Respondents' answers from the questionnaire will be categorized to identify emerging patterns, specifically related to the presence and level of influence of TikTok comments in each stage of the purchase decision. Using content analysis, the frequency of occurrence of certain themes or categories of comments can be calculated, providing a clear picture of the contribution of comments in the purchase decision process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the role of TikTok comments in influencing consumers' purchasing decision-making process. Based on the results of a survey of 70 respondents conducted through a questionnaire with 2 types of questions, namely open and closed questions, it can be concluded that comments from other users are selected by more than 60% of respondents at each stage in making purchasing decisions.

Table 1. Demographics of Closed-Ended Question Answers

	Needs Recognition	Information Search	Alternative Evaluation	Intention Recognition	Purchase	Post-Purchase
User comments on TikTok	55	53	55	52	60	43
Posts/video on TikTok	7	10	8	15	4	3
Seller profile/account on TikTok	2	2	-	-	-	-
Reviews of seller accounts on TikTok	-	5	4	3	6	-
Other User Recommendations	6	-	3	-	-	24
Total			70			

(*Data processed by researchers, 2024*)

This research shows that at the need recognition stage, TikTok user comments are the main source of information with 78% of respondents (55 respondents) choosing positive

comments from other users as an important element that drives need awareness, this number dominates compared to other options such as TikTok videos (7 respondents) or seller profiles (2 respondents). Comments are considered to be a dominant factor in providing product-related insights, with 44 comments on the open-ended question presented in table 2 assessing that at the need recognition stage comments are useful as an important reference to understand their needs. As mentioned by respondent CYA that *"With positive comments or reviews from tiktok, it makes me interested and want to buy products"* the same thing was also mentioned by respondent SS in an open question. *"Positive comments often mention the benefits of products that make us realize, "Eh, I think I need this!"""*. This is in line with research from Yuwono et al. (2024) which states that strong social evidence in the form of comments left by TikTok users who have bought or used products is a key factor in triggering impulse buying behavior and turning passive viewers into active buyers.

At the information search stage, the comments option continued to excel with a total of 75% (53/70) of respondents selecting TikTok user comments as one of the places to look for relevant information related to a particular product. In the open-ended question, comments also contributed the most and were mentioned 35 times out of a total of 70 responses (table 2). Respondent JH mentioned that comments can provide a lot of factual information that users can consider to understand and learn more about a product.

> *"Through TikTok user comments, I look for honest comments about the quality of the product, other users' experiences, pros and cons, and usage tips. I also pay attention to whether any comments mention real results or problems experienced after purchase. This information helps me understand the product more deeply, including whether it meets my needs and expectations, so that I can make a more informed purchasing decision."*

Specific reviews also have a large portion in helping users find information related to products, which in table 2 has a total of 31. The reviews in question are specific reviews about the products found in the old shop and not in the form of comments on the tiktok video uploaded by the seller. Reviews are considered accurate information about products because they tend to contain experiences from other people who have bought the product, as mentioned by respondent R that:

> *"I look for reviews from users who have tried the product. This helps me know the advantages and disadvantages, and whether the product suits my needs"*

Reviews are considered as a way to identify the advantages and disadvantages of products according to the genuine experiences of others, whose presence supports the presence of comments. This is in line with research conducted by Febrianti et al (2024) which states that the comments column is one of the active information dissemination areas used by users to find further information about a product.

Comments also dominated at the alternative evaluation stage with 78% (55/70) of respondents selecting the comments column as an option to evaluate one product over another. This is supported by the *content analysis* data in Table 2, which shows a total of 37 in the comments theme for the alternative evaluation stage. Respondent CAM mentioned that comments are useful for comparing the number of positive comments on one product to another *"The number or number of positive comments on the product"* which is validated by respondent LT who mentioned that *"I look for more and varied reviews. The more positive reviews, the more I am convinced that the product meets my expectations"*. This is in line with research conducted by Anggraini & Simanjorang (2023) which states that more comments dominated by positive comments will be more trusted by users.

Table 2. *Content Analysis of* **Open-ended Questions**

	Comment	Information on Video	Seller/Shop Reputation	Specific Review	Other People's Experience
Needs Recognition	44	11	2	15	14
Information Search	35	15	2	31	22
Alternative Evaluation	37	14	4	23	20
Intention Recognition	35	26	2	12	17
Purchase	49	5	1	12	12

After evaluating alternatives, consumers move to the intention recognition stage where consumers will indicate their purchase intentions by placing products into the shopping cart feature. Even at this stage, 74% (52/70) of respondents selected comments as a factor that influenced their response in placing a product into the cart. Respondent FJE mentioned that the comments column helped her in increasing confidence in the product obtained through the presence of positive comments *"Before I put the product in the shopping cart, I look at the comments first. If the comments are positive I will put the product in the shopping cart"*. Similarly, respondent CO also mentioned that *"Sometimes user comments on a product can*

make my decision stronger to put the product in the cart and check out immediately". The overall response from respondents also mentioned comments as a reason that influences intention recognition, where in table 2 it can be seen that comments dominate with a total of 35 followed by information on videos with a total of 26. In contrast to some of the previous stages that featured reviews as a theme that appeared a lot after comments, at the intention recognition stage, information on videos uploaded by sellers became one of the reasons that influenced users to put products into the cart feature. This is because videos tend to show direct visualization of the product as said by respondent CYA that *"Because by looking at the demonstration video indirectly I am able to see the product in full and can assess its quality"*. This is in line with research from Ramadhan & Purnamasari (2023) which states that content has a major influence in the purchasing decision-making process. It can be concluded that content and comments have a major influence in increasing the recognition of intentions from respondents.

Furthermore, at the purchase stage, comments are one of the options that really dominate compared to other stages, where 85% (60/70) of respondents chose comments as a consideration or assessment before making a purchase decision. This is in line with research conducted by Anggraini & Simanjorang (2023) which in the study resulted in comments in the form of reviews on products significantly influencing purchase intention. Respondent CO mentioned that *"Information obtained from comments is sometimes more valid than sponsorship from the manufacturer which could be exaggerated, so reading comments from users can be more convincing"* this is supported by the comment theme which also has the highest number of themes at the purchase stage with 49, which shows that users trust the information they get in the comments column as previously mentioned in the information search stage. Comments are also a popular option in the alternative evaluation stage where comments that are considered more valid and honest will significantly affect the recognition of purchase intentions and decisions.

Table 3. Post-Purchase Theme Coding

Providing Information	42
Expressing satisfaction	20
Sharing Personal Experiences	13
Provide recommendations	10

At the post-purchase stage, as can be seen in Table 3, the themes present are divided based on the respondents' reasons for providing product-related reviews, of which 61% (43/70) respondents prefer to write them in the comments column. The reason that dominates the answers from respondents in providing reviews is to provide information to others about the products they have purchased, this is shown by the theme of providing information mentioned 42 times from 70 different respondents. This supports the previous point, which is information seeking, which can be concluded that these two things are interrelated. Buyers who have made a purchase write down their information in the comment section which will be used by other users as a source of information related to the product. Respondent F mentioned that *"I am encouraged to provide opinions so that potential buyers have more complete information and can make better decisions."* which means that writing product-related information in the comments column after making a purchase aims to provide complete information to other users who will make a purchase.

Overall, comments on TikTok play an important role in all stages of consumer purchase decision-making. From the initial need recognition stage to the final post-purchase stage, comments prove to be a key source of information that helps consumers understand the product, evaluate alternatives, and solidify intent to purchase decisions. Comments not only provide insight into product quality but also offer testimonials of other users' experiences that reinforce consumer trust. Moreover, at the post-purchase stage, comments become a means for consumers to share information and experiences, creating a feedback loop that supports other users in their decision-making process. These findings confirm that comments are a strategic element that not only influence consumer behavior but can also be an important tool for marketing in increasing consumer engagement and trust in the digital age.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research confirms that comments on TikTok have a significant influence on each stage of the consumer purchase decision-making process. At the need recognition stage, comments help consumers realize their needs through positive reviews or testimonials. In the information search stage, comments become a key source for gaining insights related to product features, quality and user experience. Furthermore, at the alternative evaluation stage, comments help consumers compare products and build clearer perceptions. At the intention recognition stage, comments strengthen consumers' conviction to add the product to the shopping cart. At the purchase stage, comments become the dominant element that gives

consumers final confidence. At the post-purchase stage, comments serve as a medium for sharing information and experiences that reinforce social proof and help other potential buyers make decisions.

With a significant influence on buyer interest, comments can be used as an effective campaign or marketing tool by sellers. As an active interaction field, businesses can utilize the comment field as an information provision page as well as a page to increase user trust through increased positive comments that can be achieved through specific marketing campaigns.

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