



DIGITAL INFLUENCE: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF LIVE AND VIRAL CONTENT ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The increasing dominance of social media has positioned live streaming and viral marketing as influential strategies in shaping customer purchase intention.

Methods: This study examines the combined effects of these strategies through the lens of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which distinguished between central and peripheral routes of persuasion. While prior research has explored these approach individually, their joint impact remains underexamined. To address this gap, a quantitative approach was employed by collecting data from a survey of 100 Generation Z TikTok users.

Results: Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that live streaming content, associated with central route processing, has a stronger positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta=0.621; p<0.001$) compared to viral marketing which operates via peripheral cues ($\beta=0.285; p=0.002$). These findings suggest that marketers targeting Generation Z should strategically integrate rational message elements and emotionally engaging content to optimize user engagement and drive conversion. The study contributes to the broader discourse on digital marketing literature and offers strategic implications for enhancing conversion in social media-driven environments.

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing integration of digital technology in marketing, businesses are leveraging social media platforms to expand their reach and enhance customer engagement. Two dominant strategies have emerged in this digital landscape, which are viral marketing, characterized by rapid and organic dissemination of content, and live streaming, fosters real-time interaction between brands and customer. The proliferation of social media users has enabled businesses to promote their products and services to a broader and more diverse audience (Kusuma & Abid, 2022). This shift has transformed conventional marketing practices with digital marketplaces facilitating seamless customer experiences and direct brand-customer interactions.

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Viral marketing leverages social sharing mechanisms to amplify brand awareness at minimal cost. By encouraging customer to spread marketing messages across digital platforms, businesses can significantly increase product visibility and potentially influence purchase decisions. Through channels such as email promotions, website campaigns, and social media applications, businesses can maximize their outreach while minimizing advertising expenditure. However, measuring the effectiveness of viral marketing remains challenges due to factors such as content quality, audience engagement, and timing. Similarly, live streaming has gained prominence as an interactive e-commerce strategy that enabling customers to view and purchase products in real-time (Hou et al., 2022). This approach is expected to become more popular in the coming years as customer demand for immersive and engaging shopping experiences continues to grow (Pongratte et al., 2023).

The integration of viral marketing and live streaming features on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok exemplified their rising significance in digital marketing. According to Hou et al (2022), TikTok, in particular, has become a crucial platform for brand seeking to enhance visibility and promote products effectively. Its algorithm for content discovery and short-video format make it an ideal platform for viral marketing campaigns (Teo et al., 2023). Moreover, TikTok's live streaming feature has expanded its marketing capabilities that allowing brands to interact with customers and drive immediate purchasing actions (Wang et al., 2023). From a consumer behavior perspective, this feature appeals to both rational and emotional processing which making them highly effective in shaping customer purchase intention.

Despite the growing utilization of viral marketing and live streaming, their combined influence on customer purchase intention remains underexplored. Most existing studies examine these strategies in isolation which lack of comprehensive analysis on their synergistic effects in the digital marketplace. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of viral marketing and live streaming on customer purchase intention within the skincare industry, focusing on TikTok as a marketing channel. By integrating Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as a theoretical framework, this research seeks to provide deeper insights into how different marketing stimulus influence customer decision making on social media platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explains how individuals process persuasive messages through two distinct cognitive pathways, which are the central route and the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route entails a high level of cognitive engagement where individuals critically assess information that is perceived as credible, high-quality, or meaningful. This route is influenced by the depth of message processing and the strength and clarity of the arguments presented. Conversely, the peripheral route is adopted when individuals are either unwilling or unable to engage deeply with the information. Such peripheral cues have been shown to effectively shape attitudes and behaviors, particularly when motivation or ability to process information is limited (Cheng et al., 2024). In such cases, external cues such as source credibility, emotional appeal, and repetition could influence attitude formation rather than message content itself. Batra and Ray (1986) suggest that moderate repetition enhances understanding and persuasion while excessive repetition may lead to consumer fatigue. Repetition can also foster familiarity and positive attitude towards a brand (Sharma et al., 2022).

Research in consumer behavior has further explored how advertising contexts influence message processing routes, which is particularly relevant in the domains of viral marketing and live streaming on digital platform. Qu et al (2023) found that the viewing frequency and expected emotional responses fully mediated the link between previous purchase and future buying intentions. This strategy is frequently utilised in viral marketing campaigns. In live streaming, brands similarly reinforce purchase intention by repeating key promotional messages through varied formats which engaging both central and peripheral processing routes. The real-time engagement combined with persuasive product presentations and urgency cues increasing the likelihood of impulse buting as both the content and the interaction nudge consumers toward immediate decisions (Lo et al., 2022).

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a contemporary approach that utilizes interactive technology to disseminate information about products and services rapidly and broadly in a cost-effective way (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Beyond

its wide reach, viral marketing also offers the potential to attract valuable insights from consumer opinions and reviews that enabling marketers to refine and optimize their campaigns based on real-time feedback and engagement patterns (Gibreel et al., 2025). Recognizing the effectiveness and unique attributes of viral marketing is essential for understanding its impact. According to Choshaly et al (2020), informativeness, entertainment, irritation, and credibility are highlighted as key determinants of advertising value that influencing attitudes toward online advertising. These variables have subsequently been incorporated into various viral marketing studies to assess their influence on consumer behavior.

Informativeness refers to a marketing message's ability to effectively convey relevant product information that enhance consumer satisfaction ((Ismail et al., 2022). Perception of informativeness can vary accross generation, as different age interpret the media richness of identical marketing channels differently. A study by Lina and Ahluwalia (2021) found that informativeness in personalized advertising within social commerce significantly influences advertising value perceptions and impulse buying tendencies. Meanwhile, entertainment value effectively captures audience attention than purely informative content. Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) emphasize the importance of marketing content that delight customers and stimulate their imagination by fulfilling two primary requirements of effective advertising: providing valuable information and offering entertainment. Consequently, consumer engagement behaviors are significantly shaped by the perceived informativeness and entertainment value of online advertising (Wu et al., 2020).

The level of irritation in advertising refers to customers' tendency to skip or avoid advertisements. In digital marketing environment, such avoidance behavior poses a substantial challenge for marketers often triggered by factors including poor timing, lack of relevance, unclear messaging, exaggeration, or excessive volume, length, and repetition (Niu et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2022). High levels of exposure to these elements can evoke negative emotional responses, including irritation (Kang et al., 2022). However, Hamidi (2020) offers an important counterpoint revealing that advertising irritation is inversely related to impulsive buying behavior thereby emphasizing the importance of non-intrusive marketing approaches. Moreover, recent studies have begun to examine the role of irritation as a moderating variable in advertising effectiveness. Research by Coyle (2023) suggest that consumers' tolerance of or reaction to advertising irritation can influence their perceived value of advertisement and subsequent purchase intentions. Following irritation, source of credibility represents another indicator affecting consumer responses to viral marketing. Many customers lack of trust regarding the credibility of advertising materials often categorizing them as spam (McClure & Seock, 2020; Reijmersdal et al., 2024). Based on these considerations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. *Viral marketing, processed through informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and irritation, positively influences customer purchase intention*

Live Streaming

Live streaming is a real-time broadcasting method through social media that allow users to communicate, create, and socialize (Habibatul Jannah & Takarini, 2023). It employs communication technology that enables the real-time transmission of images and sound to various locations (Refasa et al., 2023). Typically, live streaming format features a brand representative demonstrating products and responding to audience inquiries in real time (Hou et al., 2022). By utilizing live streaming, businesses are able to surpass traditional marketing limitations by establishing direct connections with users who might be difficult to reach through other platforms (Bray, 2023). Key features available in live streaming include discounts (Refasa et al., 2023), free shipping (Priambodo, 2023), giveaways (Bhisana et al., 2024), flash sales (Bhisana et al., 2024), and Q&A system (D. Wu et al., 2024). Given its potential to enhance engagement and facilitate instant purchasing decisions, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. *Live streaming, processed through interactive engagement and promotional incentives, positively influences customer purchase intention*

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to an individual's desire to acquire a product or service, arising from their needs, wants, and trust in the product or service (Warshaw & Davis, 1985; Younus, 2015). This process unfolds continuously that commencing with the initial product or service awareness and advancing through subsequent repeat purchases, ultimately fostering customer trust and loyalty. This aspect of customer psychology is crucial for

businesses seeking to understand and predict consumer behavior particularly in the context of modern marketing strategies (Peña-García et al., 2020). While prior studies confirm the independent effects of viral marketing and live streaming on purchase intention, their combined influence remains underexplored. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3. *Viral marketing and live streaming simultaneously influence customer purchase intention*

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between viral marketing, live streaming, and customer purchase intention. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents aged 18-24, a demographic characterized by high engagement with TikTok and digital shopping platforms. To ensure the suitability of respondents for this study, an initial screening interview was conducted. Once eligibility was confirmed, respondents were invited to complete an online questionnaire designed to measure their perceptions of viral marketing, live streaming, and purchase intention. The examination of each variable's indicators is outlined through the research design shown in Figure 1.

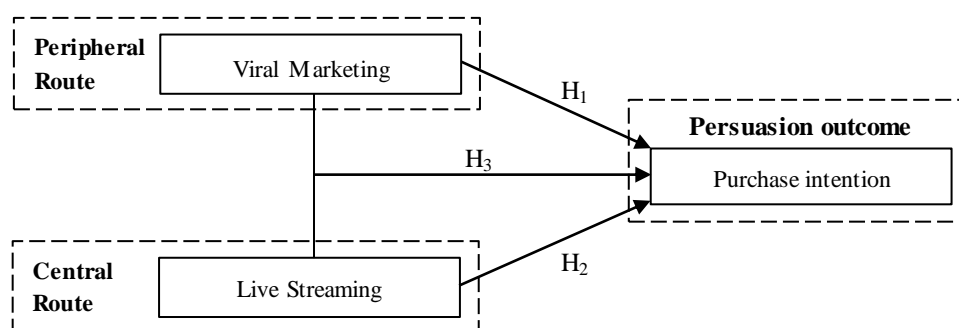


Figure 1. Research model

The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale to assess participant responses. To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, a pre-test was conducted and Cronbach's alpha was employed to evaluate internal consistency. Data collection was followed by multiple linear regression analysis which allowed for an examination of the relationships between the independent variables (viral marketing and live streaming) and the dependent variable (purchase intention). This method was chosen due to its ability to assess the relative impact of multiple predictors on customer purchasing behavior. By integrating a structured yet narrative-driven approach to data collection and analysis, this study aims to provide empirical insights into how viral marketing and live streaming collectively shape customer purchase intention on digital platforms.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The rapid evolution of social media has transformed consumer purchasing behavior, particularly among digitally savvy generations. Respondents of this study are representing a generation raised in the digital era where they have been immersed in internet and social media culture. The respondent profile indicates that the majority (50%) were 21 years old and consisted predominantly of female respondents (78%) reflecting the higher engagement of woman in social media-based e-commerce. These findings align with existing research suggesting that Generation Z is a digitally fluent cohort that heavily relies on online platforms for product discovery and purchasing decisions (Agrawal, 2022; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Thangavel et al., 2021).

Table 1.
Respondents' Criteria Based on Age and Gender

Respondents' criteria	Total	Percentage
Age		
18 years old	3	3%
19 years old	15	15%

20 years old	12	12%
21 years old	50	50%
22 years old	17	17%
23 years old	3	3%
Gender		
Male	22	22%
Female	78	78%

Source: Respondent Questionnaire Data

As brands seek to optimize engagement strategies, viral marketing and live streaming have emerged as two dominant tools influencing customer decision making. The statistical analysis, including t-test and f-test, provides empirical evidence on the significance of viral marketing and live streaming in shaping consumer behavior. The results of the t-test analysis (Table 2) indicate that both viral marketing and live streaming significantly influence customer purchase intention, particularly on TikTok platform. The regression coefficient of viral marketing is 0.285 with a t-value of 3.233 indicates a significant positive effect where an increase in viral marketing efforts leads to a corresponding increase in purchase intention. However, live streaming exhibits a much stronger influence, with a regression coefficient of 0.621 with a t-value of 10.001, indicating that live streaming has a dominant impact on customer purchase behavior compared to viral marketing.

Table 2.
T-test

Model	Coefficient Regression Value	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.754	2.180		1.722	.088
Viral Marketing	.285	.088	.229	3.233	.002
Live Stream	.621	.062	.708	10.001	.000

Source: SPSS v25.0 Processed Data, 2024

The f-test results (Table 3) reinforce the findings that both viral marketing and live streaming collectively contribute significantly to the model. The f-value of 199.415 ($p < 0.001$) confirms that the regression model is statistically significant, meaning that the independent variables jointly explain a substantial proportion of the variance in customer purchase intention. These results, based on the t-value and f-value, provide empirical support for the hypotheses proposed in this study.

Table 3.
F-test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5963.138	2	2981.569	199.415	.000
Residual	1450.302	97	14.952		
Total	7413.440	99			

Source: SPSS v25.0 Processed Data, 2024

In order to get a deeper view on the indicators of each variable, the following descriptive statistical tests are conducted:

Table 4.
Descriptive Statistical Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Informativeness	11.87	2.588
Entertainment	7.08	1.857
Irritation	6.64	1.720
Credibility	11.49	2.359
Viral Marketing (X1)	37.08	6.955
Discount	12.29	2.731
Free Shipping	7.75	1.855
Gift Away	6.50	2.144
Flash Sale	11.25	2.508
Q&A	11.90	2.721
Live Streaming (X2)	49.69	9.871

Source: SPSS v25.0 Processed Data, 2024

Viral Marketing has become a crucial strategy for modern marketers to promote products online across various social media platforms, including TikTok. Among the indicators of viral marketing, informativeness and credibility exhibit the highest mean values which suggest that customer prioritize reliable and valuable content when engaging with viral marketing campaign. Meanwhile, entertainment-driven viral marketing content is particularly effective in capturing customer attention, aligning with Saadeghvaziri and Hosseini (2011) who emphasized that entertaining advertisement are more likely to be shared and extending brand visibility. This indicator supports the peripheral route of the ELM where visually engaging content captures customer attention without requiring deep cognitive effort.

However, the irritation factor presents a potential challenges, as excessive or intrusive marketing content may deter customer engagement or even develop negative brand associations. Customer exposed to overwhelming number of marketing messages may experience advertising fatigue. As a result, individuals who perceive an overload or irrelevant content may disengage through the peripheral route so they choose to ignore the message rather than critically evaluate it. This finding differ slightly from the previous research by Indrawati and Rizqullah (2022) which confirms that informativeness, entertainment level, and credibility positively correlate with customer purchasing behavior, while irritation level does not have a significant influence.

Live streaming as another independent variable demonstrates a stronger influence on purchase intention than viral marketing as reflected in its higher mean value. This suggest that real-time interactions and promotional strategies significantly enhance customer purchasing behavior. Among the key indicators analyzed, discounts emerged as the most influential that reinforce existing research that highlights price incentives as a major driver of purchase decision (Çavuşoğlu et al., 2020; Zhong et al., 2022). Similarly, Q&A session play a crucial role in facilitating customer trust and providing detailed product information which further strengthen purchase intention. As Wu et al (2024) suggest that direct brand-consumer interaction fosters trust and confidence, increasing purchase intention.

Flash sale and free shipping, another type of promotional incentives, also contribute to impulse buying behavior as customer are more likely to make immediate purchase when presented with time-sensitive offers and cost-saving incentives. This peripheral cue such as discounts, free shipping, and flash sales trigger impulsive buying behavior which creating a sense of urgency that encourages immediate purchases without requiring deep cognitive processing. Conversely, giveaways exhibit the lowest mean value, suggesting that while promotional gifts may enhance customer engagement, it may not directly translate into purchasing decision as effectively as other incentives.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the growing body of research on digital marketing by examining the combined influence of viral marketing and live streaming on customer purchase intention in the context of TikTok's skincare market. By integrating the ELM, this study provides a deeper understanding of how both central and peripheral processing routes influence customer decision making. The stronger influence of live streaming compared to viral marketing can be attributed to its ability to integrate both rational and emotional persuasion in real-time which making it a more immersive and engaging experience for customers.

The insights of this finding suggest that brands targeting Generation Z should adopt a strategic approach that balance both central and peripheral route elements. For viral marketing campaigns, enhancing informativeness through detailed product descriptions can strengthen central route processing, while incorporating entertainment and credible influencers can optimize peripheral appeal. Similarly, live streaming strategies should focus on interactive Q&A sessions to engage the central route while leveraging promotional incentives and influencer endorsements to drive peripheral engagement. By understanding how viral marketing and live streaming simultaneously activate cognitive processing routes, marketers can develop more effective digital marketing strategies that maximize customer engagement and purchase intention.

However, this study has several limitations. It focuses exclusively on Generation Z TikTok users which limits the generalizability of the findings to other age groups and social media platforms. Additionally, it does not examine the long-term effects of these strategies, such as customer retention or brand loyalty. Future research should explore different generation cohort and assess the effectiveness of viral marketing and live streaming across multiple platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook. Longitudinal studies could also provide insights into the sustainability of purchase intentions influenced by these marketing techniques over time.

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