Social Commerce Dynamics: The Interplay of Content Marketing and Brand Image in Driving Purchase Decisions on TikTok Shop

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid convergence of social media and e-commerce has given rise to social commerce, where short-form video platforms function simultaneously as promotional media and transaction hubs. In Indonesia's competitive local apparel market, understanding the digital mechanisms driving consumer conversions is critical for strategic sustainability.

Objective: This study investigates the empirical impact of Content Marketing and Brand Image on Purchase Decisions regarding Roughneck fashion products offered on TikTok Shop.

Method: Employing a quantitative research design, empirical data were gathered via a structured online survey administered to 120 active consumers selected through purposive sampling in Bekasi, Indonesia. Data were evaluated using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) executed on SmartPLS 4 to assess both measurement (outer) and structural (inner) models.

Key Results: Psychometric testing confirmed robust convergent validity (outer loadings > 0.70; AVE > 0.50) and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability > 0.90). The structural model accounted for 58.2% of the variance in Purchase Decision (R^2 = 0.582, Q^2 = 0.559). Hypotheses testing demonstrated that Content Marketing exerts a strong, direct positive impact on Purchase Decision (β = 0.488, t = 3.101, p = 0.002, f^2 = 0.079). Similarly, Brand Image significantly and positively influences Purchase Decision (β = 0.312, t = 4.857, p < 0.001, f^2 = 0.193). Model fit indices validated structural adequacy (SRMR = 0.042, NFI = 0.852).

Conclusion: Both digital content engagement and brand reputation serve as pivotal drivers of consumer acquisition in social commerce. Notably, value-driven content marketing serves as the primary catalyst for immediate transaction decisions, whereas brand image provides a foundation of trust. Strategic managerial practices should prioritize interactive, informative media integration alongside consistent brand equity cultivation.

Keywords: *Social Commerce; Content Marketing; Brand Image; Purchase Decision; TikTok Shop; PLS-SEM; Apparel Industry*

2. INTRODUCTION

The global paradigm of electronic commerce (e-commerce) has undergone a profound transformation, moving from transactional multi-brand web portals to interactive social commerce environments. Social commerce synthesizes the community-building dynamics of

social media with the seamless purchasing mechanics of digital storefronts (Wardhana, 2024). Within this evolving landscape, platforms utilizing short-form video architecture—most notably TikTok through its TikTok Shop extension—have disrupted conventional consumer decision-making funnels. Rather than navigating a linear pathway from brand awareness to off-platform checkouts, modern consumers experience synchronized discovery, evaluation, and instant acquisition within a single unified application ecosystem.

In emerging markets such as Indonesia, the domestic apparel sector represents one of the most vibrant yet highly fragmented segments within social commerce. Local streetwear and fashion brands face hyper-competitive market structures where product attributes are rapidly replicated. Consequently, sustainable competitive advantage relies heavily on digital marketing agility and brand positioning. Brands such as Roughneck have aggressively leveraged TikTok Shop by deploying multi-faceted content strategies—ranging from interactive live-streaming sessions and video product reviews to short-form educational content—to capture consumer attention and convert digital engagement into finalized sales transactions.

Despite the rapid adoption of social commerce platforms, a notable empirical research gap persists in contemporary literature. While established consumer behavior theories emphasize the general importance of content marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2019) and brand equity (Kotler & Keller, 2013), limited scholarly attention has been directed toward isolating their simultaneous structural mechanisms within real-time short-form video commerce environments. Prior studies often examine social media marketing in static contexts (e.g., traditional feed posts on Instagram or Facebook) or treat brand image as an isolated driver without controlling for interactive content attributes (Achir et al., 2025; Asagita & Lituhayu, 2024). Furthermore, direct quantitative evaluations of direct-to-consumer domestic fashion brands operating within TikTok Shop in South East Asia remain sparse.

To address this empirical literature gap, this study formulates a structural equation model to examine the dual impact of Content Marketing and Brand Image on Purchase Decisions regarding Roughneck products on TikTok Shop. The primary research questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. Does Content Marketing exert a statistically significant positive effect on consumer Purchase Decisions within a social commerce context?
2. Does Brand Image exert a statistically significant positive effect on consumer Purchase Decisions in the same ecosystem?

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design and Sampling Methodology

This study adopted a deductive, quantitative explanatory survey design to test hypothesized structural relationships. The target population comprised active consumers who had engaged with Roughneck digital content and completed product purchases via TikTok Shop within the Bekasi metropolitan region, Indonesia. Given the absence of a complete sampling frame of all platform buyers, a non-probability purposive sampling strategy was executed. The inclusion criteria required respondents to be at least 17 years old, reside in the target

area, and have executed at least one verified purchase of Roughneck merchandise via TikTok Shop within the preceding six months.

A final sample size of N = 120 qualified respondents was successfully recruited. In structural equation modeling relying on Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), sample size adequacy is evaluated using statistical power criteria and the '10-times rule' (Hair et al., 2019). For a structural model featuring two structural paths directed at a single endogenous construct, a sample size of 120 comfortably exceeds the minimum threshold required to achieve a statistical power of 0.80 at a 5% significance level, ensuring robust estimation of parameter path coefficients and statistical parameters.

3.2 Operationalization of Variables and Instrumentation

The measurement instrument was developed by adapting validated multi-item scales from established literature, customized to fit the TikTok Shop social commerce operational context. All items were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 5 ('Strongly Agree').

Construct / Variable	Theoretical Definition & Core Dimensions	Measurement Indicators
Content Marketing (X1) (Independent)	Digital promotional strategy focusing on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent media content (Kotler & Keller, 2019). Dimensions: Value, Relevance, Curation, Content Quality.	• Value Creation (X1.1–X1.3) • Media Relevance (X1.4–X1.5) • Information Curation (X1.6–X1.8) • Production Quality (X1.9–X1.10)
Brand Image (X2) (Independent)	Perceptions and holistic cognitive associations held in consumer memory regarding a specific brand entity (Kotler & Keller, 2013). Dimensions: Corporate Image, Popularity, Product Image, Favorability.	• Corporate Image (X2.1–X2.3) • Brand Popularity (X2.4–X2.5) • Product Reputation (X2.6–X2.8) • Brand Favorability (X2.9–X2.10)
Purchase Decision (Y) (Dependent)	The psychological and behavioral stages leading to actual product selection and brand commitment (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Dimensions: Need Recognition, Consumption Intent, Repeat Purchase, Recommendation.	• Need Matching (Y1–Y3) • Consumption Intention (Y4–Y5) • Repeat Purchase (Y6–Y7) • Referral & Advocacy (Y8–Y10)

3.3 Analytical Framework and Statistical Execution

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) executed via SmartPLS 4. PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for complex exploratory-predictive research models, offering soft distributional assumptions and robust estimation for complex structural networks (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023).

The evaluation followed a rigorous two-stage analytical procedure:

1. Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model): Assessed for convergent validity via factor outer loadings (> 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50), alongside internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.70) and Composite Reliability (> 0.70) (Hair et al., 2019).

2. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model): Evaluated using coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2 via blindfolding), and overall model fit (SRMR < 0.08, NFI > 0.80). Hypothesis testing was conducted using non-parametric bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples (t-statistic > 1.96, p-value < 0.05).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The psychometric properties of the reflective measurement items were evaluated to establish validity and reliability prior to testing structural relationships.

Table 1. Psychometric Properties of Measurement Model (Construct Validity & Reliability)

Construct	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Content Marketing (X1)	0.771 – 0.958 (Peak: X1.6)	0.966	0.971	0.735
Brand Image (X2)	0.785 – 0.942	0.960	0.961	0.750
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.771 – 0.938	0.963	0.969	0.786

As detailed in Table 1, all indicator outer loadings exceeded the conservative 0.70 benchmark (ranging from 0.771 to 0.958), confirming indicator reliability. Convergent validity was established as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for Content Marketing (0.735), Brand Image (0.750), and Purchase Decision (0.786) comfortably exceeded the 0.50 threshold. Furthermore, high internal consistency reliability was confirmed across constructs, with Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.960) and Composite Reliability (> 0.961) substantially exceeding standard academic benchmarks.

4.2 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model) and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was evaluated to determine predictive power, effect magnitude, and parameter significance. The coefficient of determination yielded $R^2 = 0.582$ for Purchase Decision, indicating that Content Marketing and Brand Image jointly account for 58.2% of the variance in consumer purchasing behavior, while the remaining 41.8% is governed by external unmodeled variables. The predictive relevance coefficient $Q^2 = 0.559$ indicates substantial predictive quality.

Table 2. Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis Path	Path Coeff (β)	Sample Mean	T-Statistic	P-Value	Effect Size (f^2)	Decision
H1: Content Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.488	0.482	3.101	0.002	0.079	**Supported**
H2: Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.312	0.318	4.857	0.000	0.193	**Supported**

Hypothesis testing results confirm that Content Marketing exerts a direct positive and statistically significant impact on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.488$, $t = 3.101$, $p = 0.002$), validating H1. Similarly, Brand Image exerts a direct positive and statistically significant impact on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.312$, $t = 4.857$, $p < 0.001$), validating H2. Based on standardized path coefficients, Content Marketing exhibits a larger direct relative effect ($\beta = 0.488$) on transaction conversion compared to Brand Image ($\beta = 0.312$) in short-form video commerce ecosystems.

Model fit metrics further support empirical validity, yielding Standardized Root Mean Square Residual SRMR = 0.042 (well below the 0.08 benchmark) and Normed Fit Index NFI = 0.852 across saturated and estimated models.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical Integration and Comparative Analysis

The empirical findings demonstrate the critical role of digital marketing execution and consumer cognition in driving purchases within social commerce environments. The validated direct link between Content Marketing and Purchase Decision (H1) aligns with digital engagement paradigms established by Kotler and Keller (2019). High path coefficient loading indicates that informative, visually engaging, and curated video media directly reduces purchase uncertainty. On platform architectures such as TikTok Shop, where product discovery occurs dynamically within short-form video feeds, interactive content reduces information asymmetry and accelerates purchase evaluation.

Comparing these findings to recent social commerce literature (e.g., Asagita & Lituhayu, 2024; Farid et al., 2025) reveals consistent patterns regarding content efficacy. However, this study underscores that content marketing serves as a stronger direct driver of immediate conversion ($\beta = 0.488$) than baseline brand image ($\beta = 0.312$) in real-time short-form video platforms. While brand image establishes underlying trust and cognitive credibility (Wardhana, 2024), dynamic video demonstrations, influencer product reviews, and interactive live shopping sessions serve as the immediate operational catalyst that pushes consumers across the decision threshold.

5.2 Practical and Managerial Implications

From a strategic management perspective, the findings offer actionable insights for domestic fashion brands operating in competitive digital markets:

1. Prioritize High-Engagement Content Architectures: Brand managers should allocate digital marketing budgets toward short-form video production and interactive live streaming. Content strategies must emphasize practical product demonstrations, size guide transparency, and authentic user-generated styling reviews to maximize information value.

2. Align Content with Brand Positioning: While short-term promotional content drives immediate sales spikes, long-term customer retention requires consistent brand alignment. Visual storytelling must reinforce brand heritage and value propositions to systematically build brand equity over time.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations should be noted when interpreting the results. First, the sample was geographically restricted to consumers in Bekasi, Indonesia (N = 120), which may constrain broader geographic generalizability. Second, the cross-sectional survey design captures consumer perceptions at a single point in time, limiting causal inferences across changing market conditions. Third, the theoretical framework focused exclusively on content marketing and brand image, excluding potential moderating variables such as price sensitivity, promotional offers, or live-stream host charisma.

Future research should address these constraints by expanding sampling frames across multiple geographic regions and platform ecosystems (e.g., Shopee Live, Instagram Reels Commerce). Additionally, longitudinal research designs and complex structural models incorporating mediating variables—such as electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), perceived trust, or platform engagement—would provide deeper theoretical insight into social commerce decision processes.

6. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence on the structural mechanisms driving consumer purchase decisions within social commerce ecosystems. Both Content Marketing and Brand Image exert positive, statistically significant direct effects on purchase decisions regarding Roughneck fashion products on TikTok Shop, jointly explaining 58.2% of decision variance. Crucially, content marketing serves as the primary operational driver of conversion in short-form video shopping, while brand image provides an essential cognitive foundation of trust. Domestic fashion brands seeking sustainable market growth must integrate strategic digital content creation with systematic brand equity building to maximize acquisition and customer retention in digital commerce environments.

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