

BEYOND THE HYPE: INVESTIGATING THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR IN TIKTOK MARKETING FOR FOOD PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Since its launch in 2016 and reaching one billion users by 2022, TikTok has become a major player in social media marketing, especially for product recommendations like food items. Despite its broad user base, there's still confusion about what drives purchases on TikTok, particularly regarding authenticity, reliability, and user-generated content. This study explores how factors like product quality, security, and delivery influence food purchases on TikTok, aiming to help companies tailor their offerings and provide insights for scholarly research.

Methodology: The study used online questionnaires distributed to 300 TikTok users to identify factors influencing food product purchases, employing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Key elements analyzed included TikTok live streaming, attitude, subjective norm, perceived risk, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and product quality. Data were analyzed using SPSS, with descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Analysis tests. Ethical approval was obtained from the Universiti Malaysia Terengganu ethics committee.

Findings: TikTok Live Streaming is the strongest driver of purchase intention. Aligned with the Theory of Planned Behavior, it shapes consumer attitudes and fosters social influence. Attitude and subjective norm also play key roles, as positive perceptions and social pressure increase buying likelihood.

Electronic Word of Mouth reinforces trust through user reviews, while perceived risk negatively impacts purchases due to safety and fraud concerns. Notably, product quality is insignificant, suggesting consumers prioritize social validation, entertainment, and interactivity over detailed quality assessments.

Contributions: This research applies the TPB to understand TikTok user behavior and its impact on food purchases. It offers recommendations for businesses on leveraging TikTok's engaging visuals and user-friendly interface in their marketing strategies, and provides advice on customizing marketing tactics for the food sector.

Keywords: TikTok, online food shopping, theory of planned behaviour, eWOM, purchase intention.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological advancements have transformed industries, with social media—especially TikTok—becoming essential for businesses, particularly post-Covid-19. Launched in 2016 as "Douyin," TikTok quickly gained global popularity, reaching 1 billion monthly users by 2022, rivaling major platforms (Kaye et al., 2022). Known for its diverse and creative content, TikTok has become a powerful tool for marketing, including food products, leveraging its video-driven and aesthetic appeal (Mandzufas et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2022). Its success is largely driven by Gen Z and the rapid rise of TikTok influencers (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021). Social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions, particularly for food items (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Manaf, 2021).

Authenticity, trust, and user-generated content significantly impact consumers' willingness to try and buy food products on TikTok (Napoli et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2022a). The platform's integration with e-commerce enhances convenience, but challenges such as delivery delays (Zulkarnain et al., 2015; Liao & Keng, 2013), online transaction security risks (Wai et al., 2019), and product quality inconsistencies (Smolyaninova & Trapeznikova, 2021) can undermine consumer trust.

This study examines factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions for food products on TikTok and their association with demographic backgrounds. The findings aim to

empower business owners with strategic insights for navigating online food sales (Montag et al., 2021). Additionally, this study contributes to academia by advancing research on online consumer behavior and guiding product development aligned with TikTok trends.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 TikTok

TikTok, a globally embraced apps with 500 million monthly users, boasts virality in its short video creation tool, accessible in 150 markets and 39 languages (Pieter et al., 2021). Rapidly growing, TikTok introduces features like TikTok Shop, aligning with Wu (2021), acknowledgment of TikTok's swift global growth. With TikTok Shop integrating into the apps, the potential for e-commerce and marketing through short videos is emphasized (Rosiyana et al., 2021). Despite TikTok Shop's launch, awareness among users remains a challenge, yet its untapped potential is evident with the app's growing popularity (Pieter et al., 2021). TikTok's user distribution by age and gender highlights its success with younger audiences, especially Gen Z, comprising 60% of users (Warren, 2022). Live streaming on TikTok amplifies user engagement and product promotion capabilities (Erikson, 2021). The live streaming feature facilitates direct interaction, promoting product launches and providing opportunities for direct purchases and special offers, enhancing the overall user experience (Kusumasri et al., 2023).

2.2 Food Product

A food product, encompassing items from plants or animals, undergoes harvesting, processing, packaging, and distribution before reaching consumers (Albuquerque et al., 2022). Consumers, driven by health, quality of life, and weight management goals, increasingly prioritize rational nutrition principles in their food choices (Duarte et al., 2021). Consumer choices now extend beyond personal goals to reflect values such as environmental consciousness, with a preference for local or organic products deemed environmentally friendly (Butu et al., 2019). TikTok offers a diverse array of food products, reflecting global trends where online food sales are predicted to surpass 40% of total sales by 2026, emphasizing the rise of informed consumers favoring sustainable, delicious food (Barska & Wojciechowska-Solis, 2020).

2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention, denoting the likelihood of future voluntary purchases, is a goal-oriented

act, indicating a plan to buy specific products on the next store visit (Chetioui et al., 2020; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Influenced by TikTok's user-generated content, influencer marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), individuals predisposed to specific purchases are particularly susceptible to content impact on the platform (Lou & Yuan, 2019). TikTok's visually captivating and imaginative content positively influences consumers' intentions to buy food products, aligning with Kotler's concept of external factors shaping consumer behavior (Song & Zhao, 2023; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Purchase intention is intricately linked to how consumers recognize, choose, and use products, with social and environmental factors playing pivotal roles in the decision-making process (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

2.4 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) asserts that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control jointly shape an individual's behavioral intention (Qi et al., 2019). Attitude signifies the evaluation of the behavior in question, subjective norms denote social pressure, and perceived behavioral control relates to the ease of performing the behavior. TPB, proven effective in predicting consumer intention, has been applied successfully in various contexts, including food choice (Yadav, 2016). However, debates persist on the effectiveness of subjective norms, leading some studies to omit them in analyses (Stranieri et al., 2017). This study adopts TPB to understand factors influencing consumers' intent to purchase food products from TikTok, emphasizing the theory's three key elements: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, as depicted in Figure 1 below.

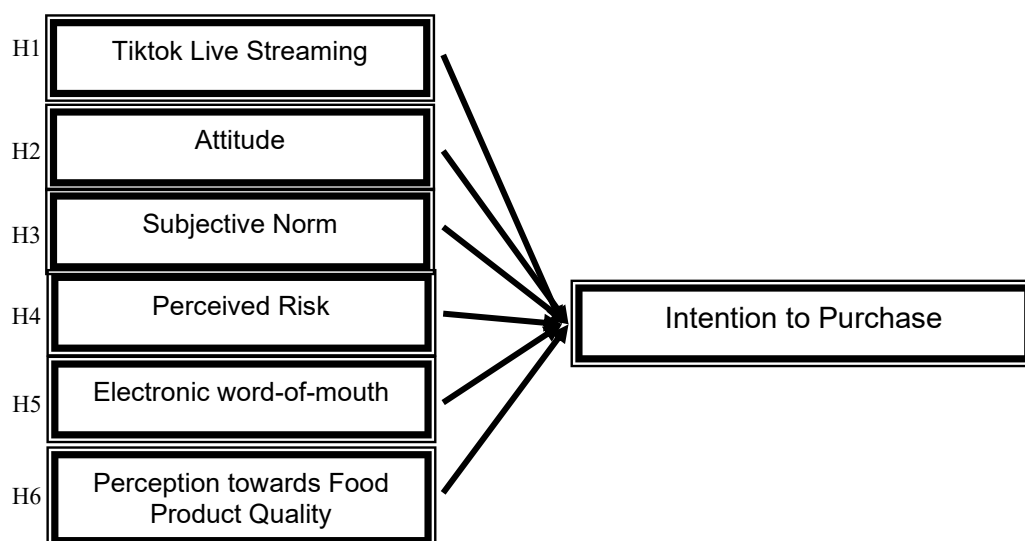


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

Based on Figure 1, the research hypothesis are outlined as follows:

- H1 : Tik Tok live streaming influence intention to purchase food products in Tik Tok
- H2 : Attitude influence intention to purchase food products in Tik Tok
- H3 : Subjective norm influence intention to purchase food products in Tik Tok
- H4 : Perceived risk influence intention to purchase food products in Tik Tok
- H5 : Electronic word-of-mouth influence intention to purchase food products in Tik Tok
- H6 : Perception of food product quality influence intention to purchase food products in Tik Tok

2.4.1 Perception Towards TikTok Live Streaming

Live streaming, a feature gaining prominence in e-commerce, offers advantages over traditional tactics. According to Xu et al. (2019), customer trust issues with static images on traditional e-commerce websites are addressed through live streaming, which conveys information through images, sound, and motion (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). This interactive format fosters trust among consumers, thereby reducing perceived risks associated with online purchases. According to (Elsholihah et al., 2023), the ability of live streaming to showcase products in real-time allows consumers to engage directly with the product, which significantly enhances their confidence in the product's quality and authenticity. TikTok introduced its e-commerce platform, TikTok Shop, in Indonesia in 2021, incorporating live streaming for real-time interaction between creators and viewers (Ahmadi & hudrasyah, 2022). This feature allows viewers to directly inquire about products during live sessions, fostering dynamic engagement. Real-time shopping attributes in live streaming create interactive virtual environments (Chandruangphen et al., 2022), and optimizing various aspects of live streaming, including seller interaction, ambiance, and timing, is crucial for effective content marketing and increased purchase intention (Wu, 2021).

2.4.2 Consumers Attitude Towards Purchasing Food Products from TikTok

Previous studies extensively explored the impact of consumers' attitude towards purchasing food products from Tik Tok within various contexts, including tourism, digital media, electronic services, mobile commerce, and artificial intelligence services (Hwang et al., 2019; Belanche et al., 2020). Attitude, defined as a person's positive or negative evaluation of behavior, develops over time through learning and significantly influences decision-making

(Nguyen et al., 2019; Belanche et al., 2020). Trust, a crucial attitude, plays a key role in driving online purchases. Moreover, the ability to witness unfiltered product demonstrations and real-time customer interactions contributes to a stronger belief in product authenticity, a crucial factor in forming a positive purchasing attitude (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Consumers' attitudes toward online businesses reduce perceived risk and increase confidence in online product and service transactions (Hasbullah et al., 2016). It is built on the belief that commitments will be upheld, enhancing consumer confidence when products align with advertised details, fostering trust in sellers and marketers. The level of consumer confidence is further influenced by the provision of guarantees and positive online purchase experiences, impacting the likelihood of repeat purchases (Retnowati & Mardikaningsih, 2021). Online purchase intent is significantly correlated with prior positive online buying experiences (Retnowati & Mardikaningsih, 2021).

2.4.3 Perception towards Subjective Norm

Subjective norms, influenced by authority figures, media, peers, and family, impact consumer perceptions, especially among first-time users (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). They exert pressure on decisions, becoming crucial in early stages and shaping purchasing choices. Consumers tend to seek validation from influencers they follow, reinforcing the belief that purchasing recommended food products aligns with prevailing social expectations (Freberg et al., 2011). Studies have shown that Gen Z and millennial consumers place significant trust in influencer-endorsed content, perceiving it as more credible than traditional advertising (Hwang et al., 2019). Social guidelines and standards define subjective norms, influencing consumers' susceptibility to social pressure during purchases (Pudaruth & Busviah, 2018). In the context of TikTok, influencers recommending food products significantly impact subjective norms, as consumers tend to trust and follow their favorite influencers' advice and recommendations. Users with expertise in food-related fields gain trust, and consumers are more likely to heed their advice and support recommended food products.

2.4.4 Perception towards Perceived Risk

Perceived risk in consumer behavior is the balance between costs and benefits, reflecting the predicted possibility of things going wrong during a purchase (Kian et al., 2018). Six elements of perceived risk include money, product, security, time, social, and psychological risks (Kamalul et al., 2018). Deceptive marketing tactics, such as edited images and misleading descriptions, exacerbate this issue, causing skepticism among consumers (Welch & Galvan,

2024). Perceived financial risk influences trust in web retailers, affecting consumers' online shopping intention (Bashir et al., 2018). Psychological risk involves the fear of losing one's sense of self due to frustration from achieving purchasing goals (Baadullah et al., 2019). Marketers can address perceived risk using relevant theories and practices (Putra & Lestari, 2023). Trust in internet retailers is crucial in managing shopping risk, as it influences perceived value and purchase decision-making (Choi et al., 2018). Privacy violations diminish consumers' trust in online retailers, negatively impacting their purchase intentions (Martin, 2018).

2.4.5 Perception towards Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to any online comment made by potential customers about a brand or company, encompassing reviews, recommendations, and critiques (Lkhaasuren & Nam, 2018). Positive eWOM significantly enhances consumer confidence, while negative reviews or scam warnings can deter potential buyers (Cheung et al., 2009). The credibility of eWOM depends on source expertise, message consistency, and perceived authenticity (Rojanakit et al., 2022). eWOM is more influential than traditional word-of-mouth (Tweephoncharoen & Vongurai, 2020) and includes various forms like computer-based WOM (pcWOM) and mobile WOM (mWOM) (Husnain et al., 2016). Social media, filled with user-generated content, endorsements, and referrals, greatly endorses eWOM promotion (Evgeniy et al., 2019; Maslim & Pasaribu, 2021). Buyers often research eWOM information, such as customer reviews and ratings, to reduce the perception of risk before making a purchase, and positive eWOM encourages trust and repurchase intentions (Adhitya, 2022; Watu et al., 2021). eWOM significantly influences purchase intentions and online trust, making it a reliable marketing tool (Kinari et al., 2023; Ihsan et al., 2022). Companies increasingly recognize the cost-effective and impactful nature of eWOM in attracting customers (Husnain et al., 2016). The incorporation of TikTok's review sections and comment-based discussions further strengthens eWOM's role in shaping consumer decisions, allowing potential buyers to interact with existing customers before making a purchase (Zahrah et al., 2024).

2.4.6 Perception towards Food Product Quality

Product quality encompasses consumers' expectations regarding a product's performance, packaging, and design (Suryati, 2019). However, some users remain wary of online food purchases due to inconsistent quality and delivery issues. Brands must actively manage

customer feedback, respond to concerns, and ensure consistency to maintain trust (Mastana, 2023). It also involves categorization based on factors like price (Sanjiwani & Suasana, 2019). Packaging significantly influences customers' perceptions of product quality, with well-designed and visually appealing packaging enhancing this perception (Andaleeb & hasan, 2016). In the context of TikTok, the packaging of a food product serves as an influential element, shaping users' opinions beyond being a mere container (Kotler et al., 2020). Product quality, along with advertising appeal and price discounts, plays a crucial role in consumer purchasing decisions, particularly in the competitive food market (Andaleeb & hasan, 2016).

2.4.7 Privacy and Fraud Concerns in TikTok's E-Commerce Ecosystem

The rapid expansion of TikTok's e-commerce has raised significant concerns regarding privacy violations and fraudulent activities. Consumers often worry about data breaches, unauthorized transactions, and counterfeit products, all of which can strongly influence their purchasing decisions. Gong et al. (2022) highlight that privacy concerns serve as a major deterrent to online transactions, emphasizing the crucial role of trust in digital platforms. This aligns with the findings of Hongsuchon and Li (2022), who assert that privacy concerns directly impact purchase intention when consumers perceive a risk to their personal information, they become less inclined to proceed with a purchase.

Furthermore, Wang et al. (2023) explore the connection between consumer trust and online shopping behaviors, demonstrating that issues such as fake promotions, misleading claims, and unverified sellers contribute to consumer distrust. This underscores the need for stricter regulations and greater accountability from platforms like TikTok to foster a safer shopping environment. Similarly, Threstia et al. (2022) advocate for enhanced platform accountability as a means of mitigating the risks associated with online shopping.

To address these concerns, TikTok's e-commerce ecosystem must implement robust security measures, transparent seller policies, and verified transactions. Li et al. (2023) suggest that integrating artificial intelligence-driven fraud detection systems could help identify and eliminate deceptive sellers before they exploit consumers. Supporting this approach, Mostafa and Hannouf (2021) argue that proactive fraud detection measures are essential for maintaining consumer trust and ensuring a secure online shopping experience.

The incorporation of Perception towards TikTok Live Streaming, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Perceived Risk, and Product Quality into the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework is essential to better understand consumer behavior when purchasing food

products from TikTok. While TPB emphasizes Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control, the unique nature of TikTok's platform introduces additional factors that influence purchase intention. Perception towards TikTok Live Streaming captures consumers' trust and engagement with live demonstrations, which can shape their attitudes and reduce uncertainty. eWOM plays a key role in shaping social norms and attitudes through user-generated reviews and recommendations, influencing purchase decisions. Perceived Risk addresses concerns about product authenticity, safety, and fraud, which can deter purchases despite favorable attitudes. Product Quality is critical in food purchases, as positive quality perceptions strengthen attitudes and reduce risk. Incorporating these variables offers a more comprehensive view of consumer behavior in the TikTok-driven food purchasing context.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach, emphasizing precise measurements and statistical analysis (Poletiek, 2013; Levy & Lemeshow, 2013). Two main types of quantitative research, descriptive and experimental, were considered (Astroth & Chung, 2018). A probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, was used to select participants who met specific criteria, ensuring a targeted and qualified sample (Baker et al., 2013). Respondents were selected based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure a qualified participant pool. Eligible participants were urban residents with prior experience using TikTok for food shopping. Individuals unfamiliar with TikTok food purchases or residing in rural areas were excluded. This selection ensured participants had relevant knowledge aligned with the study's objectives. Before participation, respondents were welcomed, introduced to the study's aims, and provided with detailed survey instructions to prevent misunderstandings. No time constraints were imposed, allowing participants to give thoughtful responses.

The sample size, determined using the Krejcie & Morgan table, ensured a statistically reliable representation of TikTok users in Malaysia (Statista, 2023). The research instrument, a questionnaire with Likert scale questions, covered demographics, TikTok live streaming, attitudes towards purchasing food products from Tik Tok, intention to purchase, subjective norms, perceived risk, electronic word-of-mouth, and product quality, with items sourced from relevant studies (e.g. Maichum et al., 2016). Data collection involved distributing online 300 questionnaires through Google form via social media such as WhatsApp (WA), Instagram (IG) and Telegram TikTok users with experience in purchasing food products in

Kuala Terengganu and Malacca city.

The reliability and validity tests demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency and construct validity across all factors in a pilot study among 30 respondents. Reliability test results show that Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceed 0.7, indicating good to excellent reliability: TikTok Live Streaming ($\alpha = 0.888$), Intention to Purchase ($\alpha = 0.755$), Attitude ($\alpha = 0.956$), Subjective Norm ($\alpha = 0.913$), Perceived Risk ($\alpha = 0.938$), Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) ($\alpha = 0.941$), and Product Quality ($\alpha = 0.923$). However, Item IP2 (I will consider to purchase food products from Tiktok) and Item IP3 (I will give priority to purchase food products on Tiktok) showed lower item-total correlations, suggesting slight concerns with internal consistency. The validity test results indicate that inter-item correlations within each construct are mostly moderate to strong, supporting internal validity. Nonetheless, Item TLS6 (I think it is a good choice to purchase food products from Tiktok live streaming) and Item ATT8 (I take pleasure in purchasing online) displayed weaker correlations with other items, suggesting potential refinement. Overall, the results confirm the scales are reliable and valid for further data collection.

This study utilizes descriptive, inferential, and multiple regression analyses using SPSS to analyze factors influencing food purchases on TikTok. Descriptive analysis (mean, standard deviation, and frequency) provides an overview of respondents' demographic profiles and purchasing behavior. Inferential analysis, through Pearson Correlation Coefficient tests, examines the relationships between all independent variables and purchase intention. Multiple regression analysis is applied to determine the combined and individual effects of these factors on purchase intention. The use of these statistical methods is justified as they offer a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior by identifying patterns, testing relationships, and assessing the strength of key predictors. This approach supports businesses in tailoring their offerings and enhances scholarly understanding of consumer decision-making in TikTok's food product purchasing context. This research has been granted ethical approval from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu ethics committee (UMT/JKEPM/2024/197).

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio Demographic Profiles

Socio demographic profiles are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profiles of respondents ($n = 300$)

Socio-demographic profiles		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	71	23.7
	Female	229	76.3
Race	Malays	289	96.3
	Non-Malays	11	3.7
Highest education level	Primary school / Secondary school	35	11.7
	Diploma / Matriculation / Foundation / Certification	101	33.7
	Bachelor's Degree	155	51.7
	Master Degree / PhD	9	3
Employment Status	Student	110	36.7
	Employed	145	48.3
	Self employed	24	8
	Unemployed	21	7
Monthly Income / Pocket Money	Less than RM 1,000	87	29
	RM 1,000 to RM 2,000	75	25
	RM 2001 to RM 3,000	67	22.3
	RM 3001 to RM 4,000	25	8.3
	RM 4,000 and above	6	2
	No income	40	13.3

The study's participants were predominantly female (76.3%). According to Digital Business Lab.com (2024), Malaysia's TikTok audience skews males, with 55.7% male and 44.3% female users. This indicates a higher male engagement on the platform in Malaysia than the global average. Although male TikTok users are the majority in Malaysia overall, it is possible that within the young adults population targeted in this study, female users dominate or are more engaged with TikTok's shopping and live-streaming features. It is also possible that more women involved in this research because women are often more willing to participate in surveys related to consumer behavior, social media, and online shopping. Research suggests that females, particularly younger ones, tend to be more responsive to surveys and more interested in sharing their opinions on such topics (Sax et al., 2003).

Majority respondents aged within the range of 21 to 30 years old (64.61%). In terms of ethnicity, 96.3% of respondents were Malay, while 3.7% were non-Malays, including Chinese, Indian, Kadazan, Murut, Iban, and Bajau. Educational backgrounds varied, with 51.7% holding bachelor's degrees, 33.7% having diplomas or equivalent qualifications, and

11.7% completing primary and secondary schooling. Only 3% possessed master's or Ph.D. degrees. In terms of employment status, 48.3% were employed, 36.7% were students, 8% were self-employed, and 7% were unemployed. The income distribution revealed financial diversity, with 29% earning less than RM1,000 monthly, 25% earning between RM1,000 and RM2,000, and 22.3% earning between RM2,100 and RM3,000. Additionally, 13.3% reported having no source of income, suggesting reliance on non-conventional income sources.

4.2 Relationship between TikTok Live Streaming, Attitudes, Subjective Norm, Perceived Risk, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and Product Quality with Intention to Purchase Online Food Product from TikTok

The relationship between TikTok live streaming, attitudes, subjective norm, perceived risk, electronic word-of-mouth, and product quality with Intention to purchase online food product from TikTok was analyzed by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The result from this analysis is as presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Correlation of independent variables with customer intention to purchase online food product from TikTok

Items	r-value	Strength of Relationship
1. TikTok Live Streaming	.811**	Strong
2. Attitude towards Purchasing Food Products from TikTok	.728**	Strong
3. Subjective Norm	.656**	Strong
4. Perceived Risk	-.296**	Poor
5. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)	.565**	Moderate
6. Perception towards Product Quality	.603**	Strong

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 2 shows the highest correlation coefficient ($r = 0.811^{**}$) for TikTok Live Streaming indicating a strong relationship with customer intention to buy food products online, suggesting a high predictability influenced by increased TikTok live streaming activity (Ahmadi & hudrasyah, 2022). Conversely, perceived risk exhibits the lowest correlation coefficient ($r = -0.296^{**}$), indicating a weak, negative relationship with the intention to buy food products on TikTok. This suggests that an increase in perceived risk has a slightly

negative influence on online purchase intentions. The correlation implies that consumers' decisions to buy food on TikTok are less affected by perceived risk, with a tendency for purchase intention to increase as perceived risk decreases (Maciejewski, 2012). Significant correlations achieved for all independent variables with intention to purchase online food products from TikTok. This fulfils the assumption of Multiple Regression Analysis which requires all independent variables to have significant correlation with dependent variables.

4.3 Most Influencing Factor Affecting Purchase Intention of Food Products from TikTok

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine relationship between all independent variables with the purchase intention of food products from TikTok. The output has been portrayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of multiple regression analysis output for the relationship between study variables and purchase intention of food products from Tik Tok

Predictors	β -value	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
TikTok Live Streaming	0.511	11.415	0.000	Significant
Attitude towards Purchasing Food Products from TikTok	0.171	3.261	0.001	Significant
Subjective Norm	0.150	3.486	0.001	Significant
e-WOM	0.126	3.184	0.002	Significant
Perceived Risk	-0.065	-2.010	0.045	Significant
Product Quality	0.120	0.267	0.790	Not significant

* $R^2 = 0.735$

Table 3 shows all independent variables have significant influence on purchase intention of food products from TikTok except for perception towards product quality ($R^2=0.735$). This indicates that 73.5% variance of the purchase intention of food products from TikTok in this study has been explained by all significant 5 independent variables.

The strongest predictor of purchase intention is consumer perception towards TikTok Live Streaming ($\beta=0.511$, $t=11.415$, $p=0.000$), highlighting its pivotal role in influencing purchasing decisions, as shown in Table 4. This finding aligns with Barta et al. (2023), who emphasized that TikTok live streaming engagement significantly drives purchase intention within the short video community. Similarly, Rinanda et al. (2024) noted that live streaming positively affects purchase intention, although its indirect influence through consumer trust remains inconclusive, suggesting that the live streaming–purchase intention relationship is

multifaceted. Furthermore, Elsholiha et al. (2023) discussed how convincing live streaming promotions lead to positive attitudes toward sellers, which in turn enhances purchase intentions.

Live streaming allows sellers to broadcast real-time video content, offering visual validation of food products, which builds consumer confidence and reduces perceived risk—critical in online food purchases. Pongratte et al. (2023) found that word-of-mouth significantly influences purchasing decisions during TikTok shop live streams, reinforcing the importance of visual engagement in consumer confidence. Additionally, Song et al. (2022) highlighted that the interactivity of live streaming facilitates two-way communication between sellers and consumers, enhancing trust and improving the overall shopping experience. Consumers see product quality, preparation processes, and freshness before buying, addressing uncertainties common in e-commerce. Moreover, live streaming fosters interactive engagement. Viewers can ask questions and receive immediate answers, replicating in-store experiences and enhancing trust and transparency (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020). Because of engagement and real-time persuasion during live broadcast, impulse buying is often triggered by time-sensitive promotions and are prevalent in live streaming contexts (Lee & Chen, 2021).

Additionally, the concept of "shoppertainment"—the fusion of shopping and entertainment drives TikTok's appeal. Kamay (2024), who explored the influence of viral marketing on purchase decisions revealed that food demonstrations, influencer-hosted streams, and taste tests engage consumers emotionally, stimulating unplanned purchases. Manzil and Vania (2023) assert that streamers themselves hold persuasive power, as their charisma and credibility influence viewers' buying behavior. However, effective live streaming requires a good internet connection, warm interaction with viewers, and a professional setup to ensure a smooth and engaging experience. When executed well, TikTok Live Streaming reduces uncertainty, builds trust, fosters engagement, and blends entertainment with commerce, solidifying its position as the most influential driver of purchase intention in this study.

Attitude towards Purchasing Food Products from TikTok ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.001$) shows a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention, aligning with Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that attitude is a key predictor of behavioral intention. This result suggests that consumers who hold favorable perceptions of purchasing food products via TikTok are more likely to translate that positive outlook into actual buying behavior. A positive attitude often stems from perceptions of convenience, affordability, and

entertainment-driven shopping experiences on TikTok Live Streaming (Zhang et al., 2022). Consumers who view TikTok as a reliable and engaging platform for discovering new food products may perceive purchases as rewarding and enjoyable, strengthening their intention to buy.

Similarly, Subjective Norm ($\beta = 0.150$, $p = 0.001$) significantly influences purchase intention, corroborating Traymbak et al. (2022), who highlighted the impact of peer and social influence on online shopping behaviors. Subjective norms reflect the pressure individuals feel from important people around them, such as family, friends, and online communities, to engage in a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In TikTok's social commerce context, recommendations, reviews, and shared experiences from peers or influencers can motivate consumers to make purchases. Social proof and endorsement from others create a sense of trust, reducing uncertainty and validating product quality (Filiari et al., 2018). Additionally, viral food trends on TikTok, challenges, and user-generated content often amplify this normative pressure, further influencing consumers to conform and make purchases to align with their social circle (Talib & Saat, 2017). Together, attitude and subjective norm reflect the social and psychological drivers behind TikTok food purchasing behavior, emphasizing the importance of building positive consumer perceptions and leveraging social influence to enhance purchase intention.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) ($\beta = 0.126$, $p = 0.002$) is also a significant predictor of purchase intention, emphasizing the influence of online reviews, recommendations, and user-generated content on consumer behavior. This finding aligns with Gvili and Levy (2016), who discussed the differences in e-WOM communication across channels and its impact on consumer attitudes. In the TikTok environment, e-WOM often manifests through user comments, reviews, product demonstrations, and viral food content, which shape consumers' perceptions of product quality, taste, and reliability. Positive e-WOM builds consumer trust by reducing uncertainty, especially when it comes from trusted sources such as popular TikTok creators, micro-influencers, or fellow users sharing their first-hand product experiences (Filiari et al., 2018). Visual testimonials, before-and-after clips, and taste test reactions on TikTok further amplify the persuasiveness of e-WOM, giving potential buyers real-time validation of a product's appeal and quality (Zhang et al., 2020).

Furthermore, e-WOM in TikTok's interactive setting allows users to seek additional product information, clarify doubts directly from others, and observe how sellers respond to feedback, fostering a community-driven decision-making process (Lee & Jin, 2012). Consumers often rely on these peer evaluations because food products carry sensory and

quality uncertainties that are difficult to assess online (Zahrani & Marlien, 2023). Positive e-WOM reduces perceived risk, while negative feedback can deter purchases, reflecting the dual influence e-WOM holds in shaping consumer attitudes and intentions. Overall, e-WOM acts as both a trust-building mechanism and a social validation tool on TikTok, significantly enhancing purchase intention by providing consumers with authentic, peer-endorsed product information.

Perceived Risk ($\beta = -0.065$, $p = 0.045$) has a negative yet significant effect on purchase intention suggests that as consumers' concerns about risks increase, their likelihood of purchasing food products from TikTok decreases. This finding is consistent with Wu et al. (2023), who emphasized that higher perceived risk is a significant barrier to online shopping, as consumers may fear product misrepresentation, fraud, poor quality, or unsafe transactions. Additionally, Rachbini (2018) highlighted that perceived risk significantly influences consumers' intentions to engage in online transactions, particularly in contexts where product quality and safety are paramount, such as food purchases. Perceived risk is particularly critical in the context of online food purchases, as consumers cannot physically inspect the products. Food products are often perishable and highly sensitive to quality and safety concerns (Ha et al., 2020). If consumers perceive potential health risks, unhygienic preparation, or unreliable sellers, their willingness to complete a purchase decrease significantly (Miftahuddin et al., 2022). On TikTok, where live streaming sales are fast-paced and visually driven, buyers may fear being deceived by appealing visuals that mask substandard products. Lack of product guarantees, return policies, or regulatory oversight on social commerce platforms further amplifies these risks (Miftahuddin et al., 2022).

Moreover, fraudulent sellers and counterfeit products have been reported on social media platforms, eroding consumer confidence (Guo et al., 2021). Consumers may worry about payment security, delivery issues, or receiving items that do not match descriptions, especially when dealing with lesser-known or individual sellers. Yang et al. (2021) stated that perceived financial and product risk significantly deters consumers from purchasing food online, as the perceived consequences of a poor food purchase can directly impact health and well-being. Therefore, minimizing perceived risk is crucial. Sellers can enhance trust by providing clear product information, showcasing preparation processes during live streams, offering customer reviews, implementing refund policies, and ensuring secure payment systems. These strategies can reduce uncertainty, thereby encouraging more consumers to purchase food products via TikTok.

Perception towards Food Product Quality ($\beta = 0.120$, $p = 0.790$) is an insignificant

predictor of purchase intention, as social influence, platform experience, and emotional engagement play a more dominant role in TikTok food purchases. Lim and Ting (2023) noted that consumer decisions on social commerce platforms are driven more by social interaction, entertainment, and peer validation than product attributes. "Shoppertainment" elements—live streams, influencer endorsements, and flash sales—stimulate impulse buying (Zhang et al., 2022), while trust in influencers and visually appealing presentations temporarily reduce quality concerns (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). TikTok's algorithm amplifies product desirability through repetitive endorsements (Liu et al., 2022b), encouraging impulse buying and prioritizing social approval over quality assessment, particularly among younger consumers (Lim & Ting, 2023). Thus, social proof, real-time interaction, and platform-driven excitement outweigh product quality in shaping purchase intention.

Based on the above discussion, H1 to H5 is accepted while H6 is rejected. These findings thus lead to the formation of emerging model of purchase intention of food products from Tik Tok in Figure 2 below.

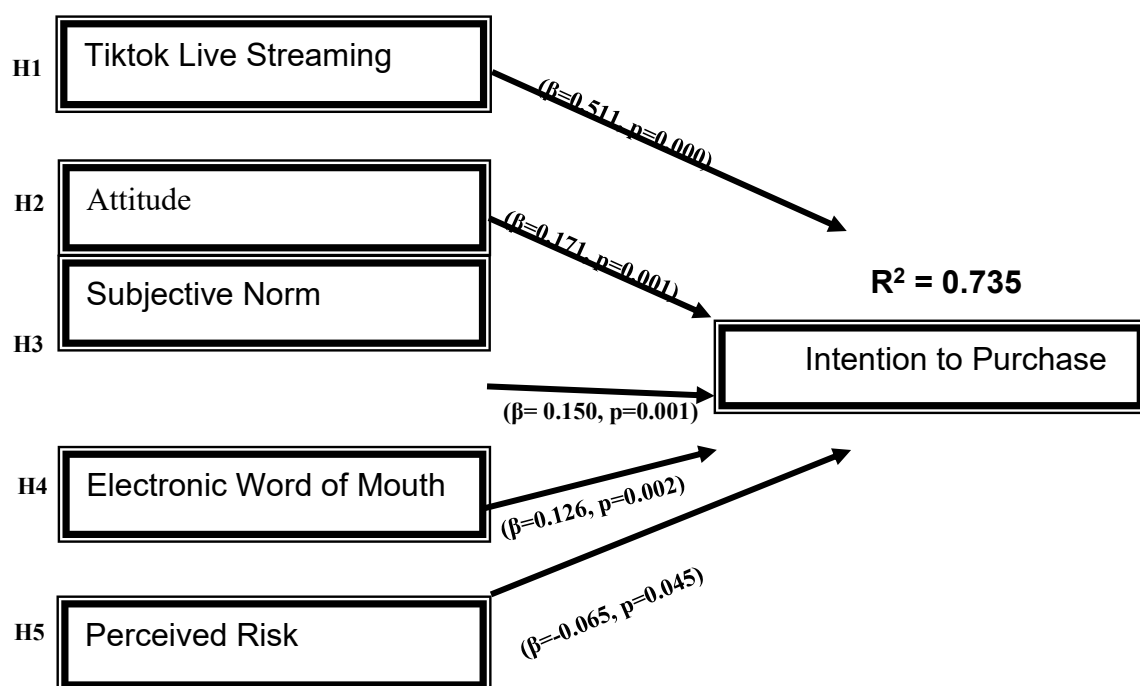


Figure 2: Emerging model of purchase intention of food products from TikTok

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings demonstrate that TikTok Live Streaming is the most influential factor driving purchase intention, highlighting its role in reducing uncertainty, building trust, and encouraging impulse buying through real-time, interactive product demonstrations. This aligns with the

Theory of Planned Behavior, as live streaming helps shape consumer attitudes and fosters social influence, ultimately strengthening purchase intentions. Attitude and subjective norm also play important roles, suggesting that consumers with positive perceptions of TikTok food purchases and those influenced by social pressure from peers, family, or online communities are more likely to buy. Electronic Word of Mouth further emphasizes the importance of online reviews and user experiences, as positive feedback builds trust and reassures potential buyers. Perceived risk, however, negatively affects purchase intention, indicating that concerns about safety, fraud, or product quality can deter consumers. Interestingly, product quality is not a significant factor, implying that consumers on TikTok often prioritize social validation, entertainment, and interactive experiences over detailed quality assessments.

These findings provide actionable recommendations for practitioners. Sellers should optimize their live streaming setups with clear visuals, good lighting, and stable internet connections to ensure smooth broadcasts. Engaging hosts should be trained to interact effectively with viewers and highlight key product attributes. Leveraging influencers and encouraging satisfied customers to share positive reviews can enhance e-WOM credibility. Practitioners should also address perceived risk by displaying transparent information on ingredients, hygiene practices, and return policies, alongside secure payment methods. Although product quality may not initially drive purchases, ensuring consistency and quality post-purchase fosters repeat buying and customer loyalty. Businesses should combine engaging content strategies with trust-building measures to maximize sales potential on TikTok's dynamic social commerce platform.

However, the study has limitations, including an uncontrolled distribution of socio-demographic profiles, resulting in an overrepresentation of Malay participants and a biased gender distribution with more female respondents. This imbalance may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data could introduce social desirability bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of the responses. Future research should strive for a more balanced and diverse sample, ensuring equal participation across genders and ethnic groups to enhance representativeness and reliability. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of TikTok marketing strategies on consumer behavior. Comparative studies across different social media platforms may provide insights into platform-specific consumer behavior, while qualitative research could offer a deeper understanding of consumer perceptions, motivations, and experiences when purchasing food products via TikTok. Addressing these limitations would strengthen future research and provide a more comprehensive view of social commerce dynamics.

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