Shaping Trust through Argument Quality: Exploring Its Impact on Purchase Intention in Social Commerce

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Abstract - The research aimed to investigate the influence of argument quality, namely perceived informativeness and persuasiveness, on trust and purchase intention within a social commerce context, focusing on TikTok. A quantitative method was applied, including 150 respondents. Participants were selected based on specific criteria of being active social commerce users. Additionally, the participants' age was restricted to between 18 and 23 years old since data indicated that Generation Z with a strong tendency to shop online, used TikTok more than other social media platforms. Data collection included distributing questionnaires through Google Forms, using a 5-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that perceived informativeness and persuasiveness affect trust towards both members of TikTok and the platform. It has a positive impact on purchase intention due to higher levels of trust in social commerce members and the platform. Meanwhile, trust towards members significantly affects the TikTok platform, and the relationship is non-significant. A potential differentiation is reported concerning the formation of trust. In this context, trust in individual users does not necessarily influence the platform within the context of TikTok social commerce. These insights are valuable for marketers and platform developers seeking to improve user engagement and transaction rates on social commerce platforms. The implications suggest that enhancing the informativeness and persuasiveness of content can be a strategic method for enhancing trust and promoting purchase intention.

Keywords: social commerce, argument quality, trust, purchase intention

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, human behavior and interaction are influenced by the rapid development of social media. It is evident from the shifting of social commerce to e-commerce, reflecting a fundamental transformation in the interaction of businesses with consumers. Social commerce includes the integration of social media and e-commerce to promote and sell products to audiences. One of the key advantages of social commerce is its ability to create an interactive environment where consumers can engage with products and brands in real time. Features like live streaming, direct messaging, and interactive posts enable immediate communication between buyers and sellers, fostering a sense of community and trust. This situation creates a more interactive, personal, and social environment in business transactions (Nathan & Blicharz, 2023). Small and large businesses have tapped the potential by promoting products and services through social commerce. It creates deeper connections with consumers and drives direct transactions through the platforms. By harnessing the power of social media platforms, businesses can enhance their market presence, foster loyalty, and drive growth. As social commerce continues to evolve, businesses must remain agile and strategic to fully capitalize on their potential.

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A survey conducted by Populix (2022) in Figure 1 has shown that 86% of respondents have used social commerce and shopped through TikTok. Therefore, argument quality is a crucial factor influencing consumer behavior and trust, including both perceived persuasiveness and informativeness. The provision of relevant, timely, and thorough information about products or services increases trust (Mathur et al., 2024).

The association between trust in social commerce and purchase intention has been investigated (Burhanudin et al., 2023; Dabbous et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022). From previous research, the impact of trust is seen as a holistic concept. However, in social commerce, a specific environment shows that consumer trust evaluation is directly tied to online platforms and the trustworthiness of the site members (Bugshan & Attar, 2020; Burhanudin et al., 2023; Ghahtarani et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2019; Sintia et al., 2023; Sohn & Kim, 2020). Earlier research also reports that objective, clear, and trustworthy information has been shown to deliver significant benefits to a product, especially in the context of social commerce (Prihananto et al., 2021; Tseng, 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Previous literature shows the important role of trust in the context of online shopping, especially due to the prominent influence of user-generated content (Dincer & Dincer, 2023; Mathur et al., 2022).

Purchasing through social commerce carries fewer risks when users are deemed trustworthy because trust significantly mitigates perceived uncertainties and potential negative outcomes. The dual dimensions of argument quality, specifically perceived informativeness and perceived persuasiveness, play a pivotal role in shaping consumer engagement and purchase decisions. Perceived informativeness maintains the extent to which information provided is seen as valuable, accurate, and comprehensive, thereby enhancing the consumer's understanding and knowledge. Perceived persuasiveness, on the other hand, relates to the ability of the content to convince and influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Wang et al., 2020).

In a social commerce context, these two elements are critical in fostering trust towards both the members of the community and the platform itself. When consumers find the information shared by members to be informative and persuasive, their trust in these members, and by extension, in the platform are strengthened. This enhanced trust reduces the perceived risks associated with online purchasing because consumers feel more confident in the reliability and credibility of the information and the platform. Members who consistently provide high-quality, informative, and persuasive content contribute significantly to building a trustworthy platform (Liu, Li et al., 2021).

Consumers search and obtain important information through posted ratings, reviews, recommendations, and referrals ((Purwantoro et al., 2023; Tanuwijaya et al., 2023). In this context, the influence of consumer trust in social commerce members on the content created should be considered. Social commerce is more balanced with networking, collaboration, and information exchange. This unique orientation fosters an environment where consumers can engage in meaningful interactions, share personal experiences, and provide feedback on products and services. Such a collaborative ecosystem empowers consumers by providing access to a wealth of social knowledge and collective experiences, which in turn enables them to make smarter and better-informed purchasing decisions. Moreover, by participating in this collaborative network, consumers benefit from the shared expertise and insights of others, which can help them to identify high-quality products and maximize their satisfaction with their purchases. This dynamic interplay of trust, collaboration, and information exchange underscores the importance of building and maintaining a trustworthy community within social commerce platforms, as it directly contributes to improved consumer outcomes and overall platform
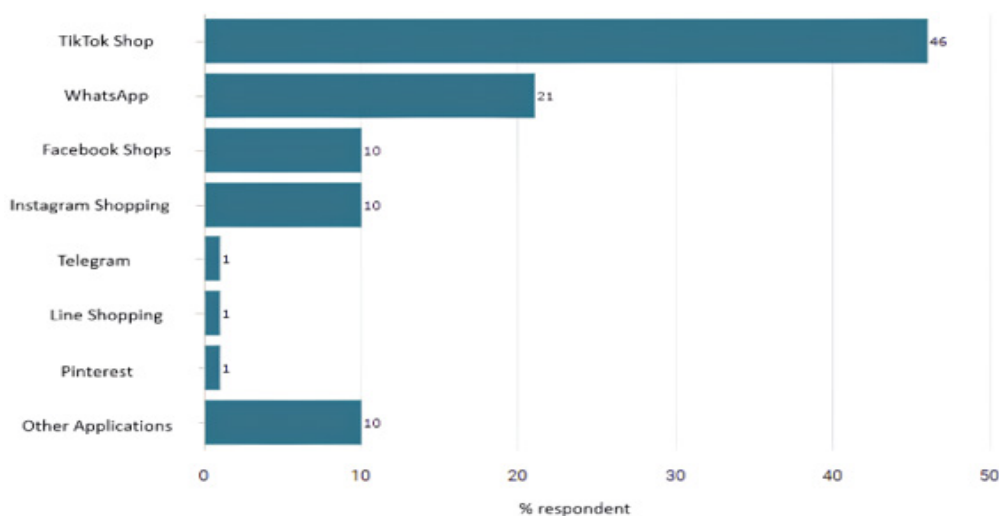

Figure 1 Social Media Used for Shopping in Indonesia
Source: Populix (2022)

success (Ghahtarani et al., 2020).

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is an analytical framework for examining persuasive messages and probability of attitude changes. As a dual theory of persuasion, ELM was developed by Richard E. Petty and John Cacioppo in the 1980s. The model shows two distinct routes to persuasion: the central and the peripheral. The central route includes meticulous and thoughtful consideration of the content and quality of the persuasive message (Susmann et al., 2022). The motivation and capability of processing the information critically analyze the arguments presented. Persuasion through the central route typically results in more enduring attitude changes. Conversely, the peripheral route requires less cognitive effort and relies on superficial cues or heuristics, such as the attractiveness of the source or the number of arguments presented. Persuasion through the peripheral route generally results in more temporary attitude changes. In this context, argument quality is a significant variable in ELM theory.

Meanwhile, perceived informativeness and persuasiveness are key determinants of the variable (Chou et al., 2022; Putra et al., 2020). Perceived informativeness refers to the degree to which a message provides valuable, relevant, and sufficient information. The variable promotes central route processing because individuals find the content worth cognitive effort. In addition, when the content is shared by other members, and the platform is detailed, relevant, and helpful, the concept is considered trustworthy. This sense of informativeness builds confidence because users have access to the knowledge required to make informed decisions.

Moreover, perceived persuasiveness refers to the extent to which a message is considered convincing or compelling. The variable can impact both central and peripheral routes. In the central route, strong arguments increase persuasiveness, while persuasive cues such as user-generated content enhance the variable without deep processing in the peripheral route. The information and recommendations are presented to persuade validity and benefits effectively. Persuasive content often incorporates elements such as logical arguments, emotional appeals, and credible sources, contributing to its effectiveness (Liu, Kang, & Haile, 2021). The following hypotheses are proposed.

H1:   Perceived informativeness affects trust toward TikTok members,
H2:   Perceived informativeness affects trust toward TikTok platform,
H3:   Perceived persuasiveness affects trust toward TikTok members,
H4:   Perceived persuasiveness affects trust toward TikTok platform.

Trust can be defined as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of others (Aloqool & Alsmairat, 2022; Burhanudin et al., 2023). In social commerce, the variable influences purchase decisions, with the absence being a significant barrier to online shopping. Trust towards members of social commerce is enhanced because users view peers as reliable sources of valuable information. It is crucial in enhancing a sense of community and mutual reliance, where members feel comfortable sharing and acting on each other's recommendations (Liu, Li et al., 2021). Similarly, trust in the platform is reinforced when users perceive the concept as a facilitator of high-quality and trustworthy interactions (Wang et al., 2020). The role of curating and presenting informative and persuasive content ensures that users receive the best recommendations. This platform's trust underpins users' confidence in the system, promoting continued engagement and participation. The hypothesis can be seen as follows.

H5:   Trust toward TikTok members affects trust toward TikTok platform.

The establishment of trust towards the members and the platform of the social commerce environment significantly influences users' purchase intention. In this context, trust acts as a crucial determinant of behavioral intention (Dincer & Dincer, 2023; Sohn & Kim, 2020). Trust towards members of social commerce enhances purchase intention because users rely on the opinions and recommendations of peers. In a social commerce context, peer reviews, testimonials, and user-generated content play a critical role in shaping perceptions of product quality and value. Users who trust peers believe in the authenticity and reliability of shared experiences and endorsements (Bugshan & Attar, 2020; Ghahtarani et al., 2020; Purwantoro et al., 2023). This interpersonal trust reduces the perceived risk associated with purchasing since users feel reassured by the positive experiences of others.

Trust in the platform has a profound impact on purchase intention (Dabbous et al., 2020). Users engage in transactions when there is confidence in the ability to provide a secure and reliable shopping environment. Trust in the platform includes the belief in delivering promises. The combined trust in members and the platform increases purchase intention. Users who trust the members and platform for recommendations and facilitation feel a strong sense of assurance and satisfaction throughout the shopping journey. This holistic trust may reduce doubts or hesitations, making users more comfortable and willing to proceed with purchase (Wang et al., 2022). Hence, the research proposes these hypotheses.

H6:   Trust toward TikTok members affects purchase intention.
H7:   Trust toward TikTok platform affects purchase intention.

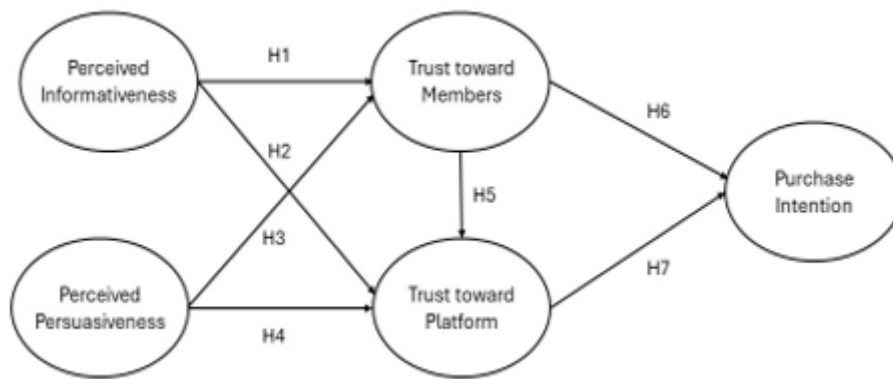Figure 2 shows the research model used. The research model illustrates the relationship

Figure 2 Research Model

II. METHODS

The predefined hypotheses are tested using a quantitative method grounded in established theories, concepts, and prior research. Non-probability sampling is used to select participants based on specific criteria of being active social commerce users. TikTok is selected as the object due to its prominent role as a social commerce platform. In Indonesia, the platform is widely used for shopping, ranking second globally in user numbers in 2023. The second criterion is that the user's age must be between 18 and 23 because data show that Generation Z uses TikTok more than other social media, and the individuals have a strong tendency to shop online (Nathan & Blicharz, 2023; Nurhayati-Wolff, 2024).

The sample size is determined to be a minimum of 150 respondents, following the guideline that suggests at least 10 times the number of indicators. Data collection includes distributing questionnaires through Google Forms, using a 5-point Likert scale for responses. For hypothesis testing, the research uses structural equation modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares-SEM (PLS-SEM) method.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey has a total of 150 respondents, with a gender distribution of 65% male and 35% female. In terms of online shopping frequency over the last six months, 46%, 45%, and 36% of the respondents have shopped online 6, 12, and 18 times, respectively. The monthly expenditure on online shopping varies with 34%, 23%, 27%, and 17% spending between Rp200,000 and Rp500,000,

Rp500,000 and Rp1,000,000, above Rp1,000,000, as well as below Rp200,000, respectively. Regarding the types of products purchased online, 26%, 22%, 20%, and 18% of the respondents buy fashion items, food and beverage products, cosmetics and beauty care products, gadgets and electronics, as well as other items, respectively.

Table 1 shows the results of the validity and reliability tests. The indicators, adapted from Liu et al. (2019), have outer loadings above 0.7. The value is considered highly satisfactory and shows reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all variables are above 0.5, showing good convergent validity since each construct explains more than half of the variance. Additionally, the composite reliability values for all variables exceed 0.7, showing strong internal consistency reliability (Haji-Othman & Yusuff, 2022).

The Fornell-Larcker criterion results in Table 2 show good discriminant validity for all constructs. The square roots of the AVE for each construct are greater than the correlations with others. Therefore, each construct shares more variance with the indicators than others (Rasoolimanesh, 2022). This result confirms that the constructs are distinct from one another and are measured accurately. The validity and reliability tests show that the constructs are reliable and valid, with strong internal consistency and clear discriminant validity.

Table 3 presents the R-squared values for the constructs, showing the proportion of variance explained by the predictors. The R-squared value for purchase intention is 0.532 since approximately 53.2% of the variance is explained by perceived informativeness, persuasiveness, trust toward members, and trust toward the platform. The R-squared value for trust toward members is 0.618, showing that perceived informativeness and persuasiveness account for about 61.8% of the variance. The R-squared value for trust toward the platform is 0.666, meaning that 66.6% of the variance is explained by perceived informativeness and persuasiveness. The R-squared values are above 0.5 and below 0.7, showing moderate correlations (Hair Jr. et al., 2014).

Table 4 shows the results of the t-test carried

Table 1 The Results of Outer Loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability
Perceived Informativeness (PI)	PI1: TikTok has relevant information about the products/ services	0.899	0.841	0.941
	P12: TikTok has complete information about the products/services	0.931		
	PI3: TikTok has timely information about the products/ services	0.920		
Perceived Persuasiveness (PP)	PP1: The information posted on TikTok is convincing	0.879	0.751	0.900
	PP2: The information posted on TikTok is persuasive	0.806		
	PP3: The information posted on TikTok is strong	0.912		
Trust toward Members (TTM)	TTM1: I believe that TikTok is consistent in quality and service	0.915	0.824	0.933
	TTM2: I believe that TikTok is keen on fulfilling my needs and wants	0.924		
	TTM3: I believe that TikTok is trustworthy	0.883		
	TTM4: I believe that TikTok has high integrity	0.915		
Trust toward Platform (TTP)	TTP1: I believe that TikTok is consistent in quality and service	0.924	0.870	0.953
	TTP2: I believe that TikTok is keen on fulfilling my needs and wants	0.939		
	TTP3: I believe that TikTok is trustworthy	0.935		
	TTP4: I believe that TikTok has high integrity	0.924		
Purchase Intention (PINT)	PINT1: I intend to purchase products or services from TikTok whenever I need to shop	0.911	0.874	0.954
	PINT2: I plan to purchase products or services from TikTok in the future	0.949		
	PINT3: I predict that I will purchase products or services on TikTok	0.944		

Source: Data processed (2024)

Table 2 The Results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variable	PI	PP	PINT	TTM	TTP
PI	0.917				
PP	0.712	0.867			
PINT	0.583	0.701	0.935		
TTM	0.723	0.732	0.639	0.908	
TTP	0.724	0.760	0.704	0.721	0.933

Note: Perceived Informativeness (PI), Perceived Persuasiveness (PP), Purchase Intention (PINT), Trust toward Members (TTM), and Trust toward Platform (TTP).

Table 3 The Results of R-Squared Values

Variable	R-Squared
PINT	0.532
TTM	0.618
TTP	0.666

Note: Purchase Intention (PINT), Trust toward Members (TTM), and Trust toward Platform (TTP).
Source: Data processed (2024)

Table 4 The Result of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Original Sample	T-statistics	P Values	Notes
H1: PI → TTM	0.408	5.170	0.000	H1 accepted
H2: PI → TTP	0.274	2.557	0.011	H2 accepted
H3: PP → TTM	0.442	5.597	0.000	H3 accepted
H4: PP → TTP	0.394	3.923	0.000	H4 accepted
H5: TTM → TTP	0.234	1.446	0.149	H5 not accepted
H6: TTM → PINT	0.274	2.228	0.026	H6 accepted
H7: TTP → PINT	0.506	4.494	0.000	H7 accepted

Source: Data processed (2024)

out to determine the significance level of the initial hypothesis. The hypothesis is accepted, and the variable is declared to have a significant effect when the p-value is less than 0.05, and the t-statistic is above 1.96 (Hair Jr. et al., 2014). The results show that all hypotheses are accepted except H5.

Perceived informativeness significantly affects trust towards members (H1) and trust towards platform (H2). Perceived informativeness plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions of credibility and trustworthiness in online content. Information perceived as relevant, timely, and comprehensive tends to increase trust in the source (Bugshan & Attar, 2020; Yasa et al., 2021). A strategic focus on delivering informative content can strengthen trust among platform members, shaping purchase intention within social commerce settings. Perceived informativeness of consumer-generated content serves as a key driver in establishing trust towards social commerce platforms. Informative content impacts trust in individual members and the platform hosting the content. By focusing on delivering informative content, social commerce platforms can strengthen trust among members to influence consumers' purchase intention (H6) (Burhanudin et al., 2023; Govender & Yavisha, 2023; Sintia et al., 2023).

Perceived persuasiveness has a significant effect on trust toward members of social commerce platform (H3). This result is consistent with previous research that suggests the effects of trust. A persuasive message influences an individual's attitudes and beliefs, leading to a higher level of trust. In this context, individuals tend to trust information presented compellingly and convincingly. Research shows that perceived persuasiveness can enhance the credibility of a message. The persuasiveness of content strengthens trust in the individual members and the platform (H4) (Dabbous et al., 2020; Sohn & Kim, 2020). Therefore, social commerce platform can increase trust and purchase intention by presenting information persuasively, as reported in H7.

H5 shows that trust in members does not significantly influence the platform. This result is consistent with previous research, where trust in members is crucial in various online contexts, but the direct effect is not significant. Trust in members may influence other variables or be moderated by different factors, showing the multifaceted nature of the dynamics in online environments. According to Li and Wang (2020), trust in site members reduces users' risk perceptions. Based on Chen and Shen (2015), trust in the community fully mediates the effect of the variable on social sharing intention. Therefore, trust in members may influence other variables, such as social sharing intention. However, according to Wu and Shen (2018), the variable negatively moderated the effect of trust in the platform. This statement shows the complex and counterintuitive relationship between trust in members and the platform. Additionally, according to Jang and Kim (2023), trust in the platform provider is closely connected to members.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the research aims to investigate the influence of argument quality, namely perceived informativeness and persuasiveness, on trust and purchase intention within a social commerce context, focusing on TikTok. The results show that perceived informativeness and persuasiveness significantly affect trust toward members and platforms. The importance of argument quality in shaping trust to drive purchase intention is also reported in social commerce. Meanwhile, relevant, accurate, and comprehensive content increases trust in TikTok members. Perceived informativeness significantly influences trust in the platform. Informative content enhances trust in individual members and TikTok as a platform, influencing purchase intention. In addition, perceived persuasiveness significantly affects trust towards members. Persuasive messages increase trust in TikTok members by enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the source. Perceived persuasiveness also significantly influences trust in the platform. Persuasive content builds trust in both members and the platform, influencing purchase intention. Meanwhile, trust in members does not significantly influence the variable in the platform.

The research implications show the critical role

of perceived informativeness and persuasiveness in cultivating trust on social commerce platforms, such as TikTok. The platforms prioritize delivering relevant, accurate, and comprehensive content to enhance trust in individual members and platform. By strategically focusing on the creation of informative and persuasive content, trust and purchase intention can be improved. Additionally, the research shows the complex dynamics between trust in members and platform. Understanding the connection between different factors can assist in designing effective trust-building strategies, considering the potential moderating effects on the platform. These insights help social commerce platforms to increase trust and purchase intention.

Given that the research participants are active social commerce users aged between 18 and 23, the findings have particular relevance for Generation Z. This demographic is known for its strong presence on TikTok and tendency to shop online. The research indicates that for Generation Z, both perceived informativeness and persuasiveness are crucial in building trust. Trust towards members encourages Generation Z users to rely on the opinions and recommendations of their peers, which can significantly influence their purchase intentions. Therefore, platforms must ensure that their members create content that is not only engaging but also reliable and trustworthy. On the other hand, platforms that feature persuasive content, which convincingly communicates the benefits and features of products or services, can strengthen their overall credibility and trustworthiness. This approach will not only increase trust among Generation Z users but also encourage them to engage more actively with the platform, leading to increased purchase intentions.

The research presents some limitations, focusing on TikTok as a social commerce platform. While TikTok has a prominent role in social commerce, the research results may not be fully generalizable to other platforms with different user bases, features, or content dynamics. Each social commerce platform has unique attributes that could influence user behavior and trust differently. Therefore, future research should include a broader range of social commerce platforms to validate and compare the results across diverse contexts. Investigating other platforms, like Instagram, Facebook Marketplace, or Whatsapp, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how perceived informativeness and persuasiveness influence trust and purchase intention in various social commerce environments. Morever, the research only focuses on a sample consisting exclusively of Generation Z individuals in Indonesia. Different generations have varying perceptions of informativeness, persuasiveness, and trust in social commerce platforms. The results may not be generalizable to older or younger populations who interact differently with the platforms. Therefore, the research is not universally applicable across different cultural settings. Cross-cultural comparisons should be conducted to examine how cultural contexts influence trust-building mechanisms and purchase intentions in social commerce. This approach will enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide insights into how social commerce strategies can be tailored to different cultural and generational contexts.

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