SENTRALISASI
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SORONG
https://ejournal.um-sorongac.id/index.php/sentralisasi
p-ISSN 1979-7567
e-ISSN 2614-4328

Viral Marketing Mechanisms on TikTok Shop: The Role of Content Creativity and Social Proof in Engagement and Sales Performance for MSMEs in Jambi

Laura Prasasti*[1], Krismonika Hidayat[2], Widyadhana Candraningtias[3]

[1, 2, 3] Universitas Dinamika Bangsa, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received, 28-10-2026
Accepted, 18-11-2026
Published, 20-11-2026

Keywords:

Viral Marketing, Content Creativity, Social Proof, Engagement, Sales Performance

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the viral marketing mechanisms on TikTok Shop by analyzing the role of Content Creativity and Social Proof in driving Engagement and Sales Performance among MSMEs in Jambi. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data were collected from a sample of 400 MSMEs and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via SmartPLS4. Measurement model evaluation confirmed that all indicators for Content Creativity, Engagement, Social Proof, and Sales Performance met the requirements for convergent and discriminant validity. The research results indicated that Content Creativity and Social Proof have a positive and significant direct effect on both Engagement and Sales Performance. Furthermore, Engagement was proven to have a significant direct effect on Sales Performance and effectively acts as a mediating variable between Content Creativity, Social Proof, and Sales Performance. These findings provide a theoretical contribution to the digital marketing literature as well as practical implications for MSMEs to optimize content creativity, Social Proof and consumer engagement to achieve sustainable sales growth.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.

Corresponding Author:

Laura Prasasti
Faculty of Management and Business Science, Dinamika Bangsa University, Jambi, Indonesia
Jalan Kol. M. Kukuh, Paal Lima, Kec. Kota Baru, Kota Jambi, Jambi 36125
Email: *Lauraprasasti28@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The evolution of digital technology has fundamentally transformed marketing communication patterns, including how consumers interact with content and make purchasing decisions (Zhang et al., 2023;Febrianti et al., 2024). The rise of short-form video platforms like TikTok has created a new marketing ecosystem driven by algorithms, creativity, and social proof, thereby giving rise to viral marketing mechanisms that are becoming increasingly dominant in digital marketing (Alfath & Faruqi, 2023;Meliawati et al., 2023;Patricy & Dewi, 2025). TikTok has emerged as one of the fastest growing applications globally and has proven to reshape the business landscape for MSMEs, including in Indonesia (Zhang et al., 2023;Yang & Zhan, 2025). Short form video based viral marketing enables businesses to influence consumers not merely through explicit promotional messages, but through a combination of creativity, entertainment, authenticity, and real-time digital interaction (Ferdianto et al., 2024;Bo et al., 2025;Haque, 2020; Zulstra, 2025). The surge in sales via TikTok Shop experienced by many MSMEs in Indonesia demonstrates the immense potential of optimizing digital marketing strategies centered on creative content (Febrianti et al., 2024;Meliawati et al., 2023;Mohamed & Liang, 2025).

This is despite the fact that MSMEs in Jambi contribute significantly to the regional economy, and the success of digital marketing is a key determinant of their business competitiveness (Liu & Wang, 2023;Pratama, A.M., Subagja, G., Duta, 2023;Syaifullah et al., 2021);(Chin & Ooi, 2024). On the other hand, the effectiveness of viral marketing is heavily dependent on the quality of content creativity and the presence of social proof such as consumer reviews, comments, like counts, and user testimonials (Bo et al., 2025;Haque, 2020;Novandari et al., 2023;Yang & Zhan, 2025). Social proof acts as a trust signal capable of accelerating the purchase decision-making process within the e-commerce context ((Patricy & Dewi, 2025;Dou & Zhang, 2023;Wardati & ER, 2019). Nevertheless, academic literature reveals a research gap regarding the interrelationships among content creativity, social proof, engagement, and MSME sales performance on the TikTok Shop platform,

particularly within the local Indonesian context (Xiao et al., 2019;Syaifullah et al., 2021;Chin & Ooi, 2024).

To provide a robust theoretical foundation for explaining these relationships, this study adopts the Resource Based View (RBV) as the primary overarching framework (grand theory) at the firm level, combined with the Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) framework, Social Proof Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) at the consumer level. According to RBV, internal capabilities and unique marketing assets such as content creativity represent rare, valuable, and inimitable resources that enable MSMEs to build a sustainable competitive advantage (Gilbert Johan Martin Sinaga, 2025; Mohamed & Liang, 2025). However, to explain how firm level marketing activities translate into firm performance, an integrative cross level mechanism is required. Within the S-O-R framework, content creativity functions as an internal organizational stimulus, while social proof serves as an external environmental stimulus. These dual stimuli trigger cognitive and affective evaluation processes in consumers (organism), which manifest in active digital interaction and engagement (response). In turn, heightened consumer engagement acts as a crucial behavioral bridge that links consumer level responses back to firm level outcomes.

Numerous prior studies have demonstrated the importance of content creativity, social proof, and engagement in digital marketing. However, many existing studies remain fragmented, often focusing broadly on general consumer segments or established corporate brands rather than specific micro enterprise settings on emerging social commerce platforms like TikTok Shop(Gao & Wu, 2024;Sari et al., 2023).Furthermore, digital marketing literature within the short video context predominantly evaluates customer purchase intention rather than the perceived sales performance of MSMEs (Dou & Zhang, 2023; Mohamed & Liang, 2025;Safitri, 2025). Measuring sales performance based on owner/manager perceptions via structured survey instruments provides valuable insights into firm-level outcomes, though relying on self reported perception rather than objective transaction logs represents an inherent boundary of such research designs. This study addresses these

theoretical and empirical gaps by establishing an integrative framework that analyzes the mechanisms through which content creativity and social proof drive digital engagement, ultimately enhancing the perceived sales performance of MSMEs in Jambi Province (Syaifullah et al., 2021;Chin & Ooi, 2024;Xiao et al., 2019b;Wardati & ER, 2019;Azzaakiyyah & Rijal, 2025;Harrison-Walker & Jiang, 2023).

Consequently, this research is significant for making both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it is expected to enrich the digital marketing literature regarding the roles of content creativity and social proof within the short video marketing ecosystem. Practically, the findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for MSMEs in Jambi City on optimizing TikTok Shop as an effective, competitive, and sustainable marketing platform in the digital economy era.

2. Methods

A purposive sampling technique was applied, where respondents were selected based on specific criteria, including: (i) being the owner or manager of an MSME operating in Jambi City, (ii) actively using TikTok to promote business products, (iii) being directly involved in managing TikTok marketing or content activities. Since the exact total population of MSMEs utilizing TikTok Shop in Jambi City is unknown, the minimum sample size was determined following the guideline by Hair et al., (2019)., which recommends a ratio of 10 observations per indicator. With 25 research indicators, the minimum required sample size was 250 respondents. A total of 400 MSMEs were selected as the sample, which exceeds the minimum requirement, thereby providing adequate statistical power and estimation stability for the proposed PLS-SEM model (Hair et al., 2019). This relatively large sample size also enables the study to capture variations in MSME TikTok usage behavior.

The measurement instrument consists of a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All measurement items were adapted from established and empirically validated scales, with adjustments made to suit the context of MSMEs and social commerce marketing. Content creativity is measured

using items adapted from (Lee & Hong, 2016;Smith et al., 2007), focusing on content originality, uniqueness of ideas, visual quality, relevant content and the ability to evoke audience emotions. Social proof is assessed through items adapted from (Amblee & Bui, 2011; Dwidienawati et al., 2020), reflecting owner perceptions regarding user reactions (likes, shares, comments), customer reviews, product ratings, purchase volume, and influencer endorsements. Engagement is measured using items adapted from (Schivinski et al., 2016), capturing the perceived level of interactive consumer responses (likes, comments, shares, video completion, and click-through actions) on TikTok content. Furthermore, MSME sales performance encompasses items adapted from (Odoom et al., 2017;Syaifullah et al., 2021b), capturing sales volume, revenue growth, transaction frequency, conversion rates, and customer base expansion as perceived by the business owners. The quality of the instrument is evaluated via the measurement model (outer model) using criteria such as outer loadings (>0.70), Cronbach's alpha (>0.70), composite reliability (>0.70), and average variance extracted (AVE >0.50).

Data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis followed a two step evaluation process: first, assessing the outer model for validity and reliability, and second, evaluating the structural model to test the hypotheses. A bootstrapping procedure was applied to determine the significance of path coefficients and mediation effects. In this model, content creativity and social proof serve as exogenous variables, engagement acts as the mediating variable, and MSME sales performance represents the endogenous outcome variable.

3. Results

Before presenting the outer loading results, it is important to first assess the measurement model to confirm that each indicator accurately represents its corresponding construct. This evaluation involves examining convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. Convergent validity is assessed by analyzing the outer loading values of each

indicator, which indicate how strongly the items are associated with their respective latent constructs. An indicator is considered acceptable when its outer loading exceeds 0.70, as this suggests that it adequately reflects the underlying construct. The table below displays the outer loading values for all indicators included in this study.

Table 1. Outer Loading

	CC	ENG	SP	SPF
CC1	0,826			
CC2	0,855			
CC3	0,868			
CC4	0,854			
CC5	0,849			
ENG1		0,850		
ENG2		0,881		
ENG3		0,863		
ENG4		0,836		
ENG5		0,845		
SP1			0,839	
SP2			0,851	
SP3			0,875	
SP4			0,840	
SP5			0,805	
SPF1				0,872
SPF2				0,879
SPF3				0,868
SPF4				0,839
SPF5				0,852

Source: SmartPLS4

Based on Table 1 of the outer loadings, all indicators for Content Creativity (CC1–CC5 ranging from 0.826 to 0.868), Engagement (ENG1–ENG5 ranging from 0.836 to 0.881), Social Proof (SP1–SP5 ranging from 0.805 to 0.875), and Sales Performance (SPF1–SPF5 ranging from 0.839 to 0.879) have met the convergent validity requirement because all of

SENTRALISASI
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SORONG
https://ejournal.um-sorongac.id/index.php/sentralisasi
p-ISSN 1979-7567
e-ISSN 2614-4328

their loading values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.70. To further evaluate the quality of the measurement model, construct reliability and validity tests were conducted. Table 2 demonstrates that all variables achieved satisfactory reliability and convergent validity, confirming that the measurement model meets all statistical criteria.

Table 2. Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CC	0,904	0,905	0,929	0,723
ENG	0,908	0,909	0,931	0,731
SP	0,898	0,898	0,924	0,710
SPF	0,914	0,914	0,935	0,743

Source: SmartPLS4

The results presented in the table demonstrate strong construct validity and internal consistency reliability across all four variables (CC, ENG, SP, and SPF). Specifically, all Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values (both rho_a and rho_c) exceed the conventional threshold of 0.70 ranging from 0.898 to 0.935 thereby confirming high internal reliability. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct surpasses the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50, with values ranging from 0.710 to 0.743, which successfully establishes convergent validity. To further verify discriminant validity at the indicator level, cross loadings were examined. Table 3 demonstrates that all items load highest on their respective constructs compared to other variables, satisfying the requirements for discriminant validity.

Table 3. Cross Loading

	CC	ENG	SP	SPF
CC1	0,826	0,596	0,619	0,613
CC2	0,855	0,638	0,686	0,635
CC3	0,868	0,630	0,705	0,628

CC4	0,854	0,604	0,789	0,660
CC5	0,849	0,653	0,730	0,688
ENG1	0,673	0,850	0,625	0,644
ENG2	0,631	0,881	0,582	0,627
ENG3	0,613	0,863	0,608	0,677
ENG4	0,596	0,836	0,545	0,630
ENG5	0,625	0,845	0,644	0,733
SP1	0,680	0,604	0,839	0,605
SP2	0,712	0,548	0,851	0,638
SP3	0,707	0,574	0,875	0,613
SP4	0,734	0,608	0,840	0,655
SP5	0,666	0,630	0,805	0,582
SPF1	0,630	0,655	0,644	0,872
SPF2	0,646	0,684	0,600	0,879
SPF3	0,598	0,642	0,584	0,868
SPF4	0,651	0,679	0,657	0,839
SPF5	0,737	0,683	0,675	0,852

Source: SmartPLS4

Based on Table 3 regarding Cross Loading, the analysis results indicate that each indicator has a much higher correlation with its primary construct compared to the other latent variables. This proves that each indicator group Content Creativity, Engagement, Social Proof, and Sales Performance consistently and accurately measures its respective construct without any overlap. Overall, these findings confirm that the research model has met the criteria for discriminant validity exceptionally well. Consequently, all indicators are proven valid and reliable for representing their respective latent variables in the subsequent structural analysis stage, for the bootstrapping results please see below.

SENTRALISASI
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SORONG
https://ejournal.um-sorongac.id/index.php/sentralisasi
p-ISSN 1979-7567
e-ISSN 2614-4328

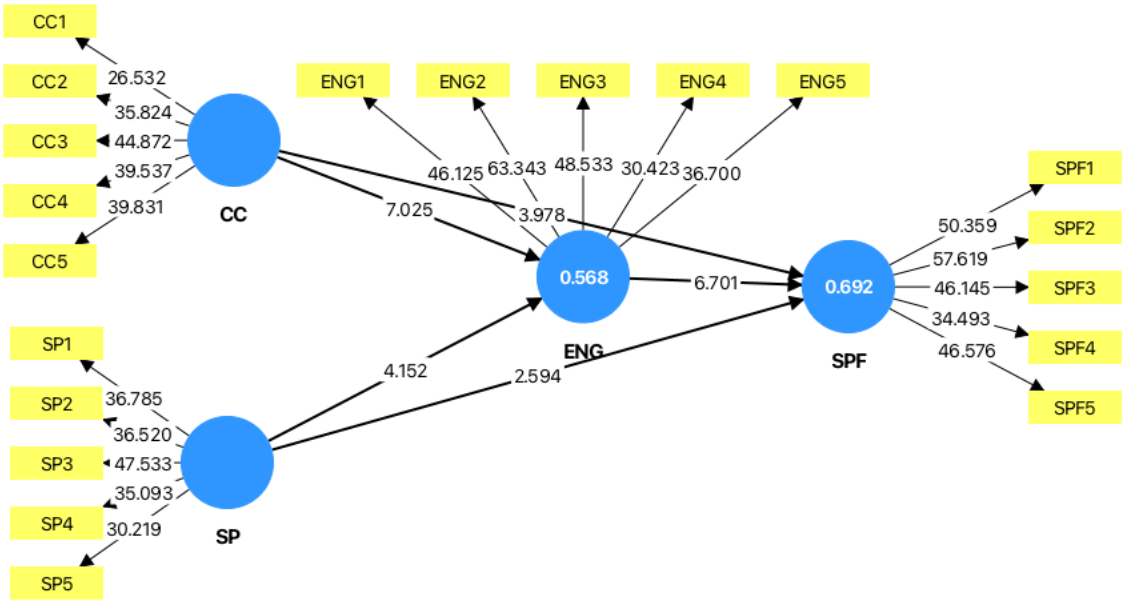


Figure 1. Results of the Bootstrapping Analysis
Source: SmartPLS4

Based on the bootstrapping analysis results, all path relationships between constructs have proven to be significant, as the t-statistic values for every path exceed the required minimum threshold. The direct effects of Content Creativity on Engagement and Sales Performance show significant relationships. Additionally, Social Proof has proven to exert a significant effect on both Engagement and Sales Performance, while Engagement also provides a significant effect on Sales Performance. To evaluate the model's out-of-sample predictive performance, Q^2 predict analysis was conducted. Table 4 demonstrates that the Q^2 predict values for both Engagement and Sales Performance are positive and substantial, verifying the model's strong predictive relevance.

Table 4. Q^2predict

	Q^2predict
ENG	0,563
SPF	0,606

Source: SmartPLS4

SENTRALISASI
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SORONG
https://ejournal.um-sorongac.id/index.php/sentralisasi
p-ISSN 1979-7567
e-ISSN 2614-4328

The provided table presents the predictive relevance Q^2 predict values from a PLSpredict analysis for two endogenous constructs, ENG and SPF. Specifically, the ENG construct yields a Q^2predict value of 0.563, while the SPF construct achieves a slightly higher value of 0.606. Because both figures are well above the zero threshold and notably exceed 0.50 the structural model demonstrates strong out of sample predictive power for both variables, confirming that the model can accurately predict the indicator values of ENG and SPF for new observations.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination values on the endogenous variables indicate a strong predictive capability for the research model. Content Creativity and Social Proof are able to substantially explain the variance in the Engagement variable. Similarly, the variance in Sales Performance can be explained simultaneously by Content Creativity, Social Proof, and Engagement with a high level of accuracy, for the direct effect and indirect effect results please see below.

Table 5. Direct Effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
CC -> ENG	0,482	0,480	0,069	7,025	0,000
CC -> SPF	0,271	0,272	0,068	3,978	0,000
ENG -> SPF	0,433	0,430	0,065	6,701	0,000
SP -> ENG	0,304	0,305	0,073	4,152	0,000
SP -> SPF	0,204	0,207	0,079	2,594	0,010

Source: SmartPLS4

Table 5 presents the direct path coefficients among Content Creativity (CC), Social Proof (SP), Engagement (ENG), and Sales Performance (SPF), indicating that all proposed direct relationships are positive and statistically significant ($P < 0.05$, with t-statistics exceeding the critical value of 1.96). Specifically, Content Creativity exerts a strong positive direct effect on Engagement $\beta = 0.482$, $t = 7.025$, $p = 0.000$) and a moderate positive direct

effect on Sales Performance β = 0.271, t = 3.978, p = 0.000). Similarly, Social Proof positively and significantly influences both Engagement (β = 0.304, t = 4.152, p = 0.000) and Sales Performance (β = 0.204, t = 2.594, p = 0.010), while Engagement itself demonstrates a substantial positive direct impact on Sales Performance (β = 0.433, t = 6.701, p = 0.000).

Table 6. Indirect Effect

	Original sample (O)	**Sample mean (M)**	**Standard deviation (STDEV)**	**T statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P values**
CC -> ENG -> SPF	0,209	0,206	0,044	4,744	0,000
SP -> ENG -> SPF	0,131	0,130	0,034	3,878	0,000

Source: SmartPLS4

Table 6 illustrates the indirect effects within the structural model, confirming the mediating role of Engagement between the independent variables and Sales Performance. Both indirect pathways are statistically significant at the 0.001 level: Content Creativity positively influences Sales Performance through Engagement (β = 0.209, t = 4.744, p = 0.000), and Social Proof likewise exerts a positive indirect effect on Sales Performance via Engagement (β = 0.131, t = 3.878, p = 0.000). These findings demonstrate that Engagement serves as a crucial mechanism that translates both creative content and social proof into enhanced sales outcomes.

Taken together, the results from both tables confirm a partial mediation model in which Engagement bridges the relationship between marketing stimuli and sales performance. Because Content Creativity and Social Proof maintain statistically significant direct effects on Sales Performance alongside their significant indirect effects through Engagement, businesses can drive sales not only directly through compelling content and social validation, but also indirectly by fostering deeper audience engagement. Notably,

Content Creativity emerges as the strongest overall driver in the model, exhibiting the largest direct and indirect path coefficients toward both Engagement and Sales Performance.

4. Discussion

Content Creativity on Engagement

The results indicate that content creativity has a positive and significant effect on engagement. The positive and significant effect of content creativity on engagement indicates that creative TikTok Shop content can stimulate stronger audience responses. Creative content characterized by originality, uniqueness, visual attractiveness, relevance, and emotional appeal is more capable of capturing users' limited attention in the highly competitive short-form video environment. This finding is consistent with Lee & Hong, (2016), who found that advertising creativity was a key driver of favorable behavioral responses to social media advertising, including users' willingness to express positive responses such as liking and sharing. More recently, The positive and significant effect of content creativity on engagement indicates that creative and well designed social media content can stimulate stronger audience responses. This finding is consistent with Pathak and Pathak & Kaushik, (2024), who found that different characteristics of brand-posted social media content, including content appeal, vividness, and interactivity, influence consumer engagement on Instagram. Similarly, Kanuri et al., (2024) demonstrated that visual characteristics of social media content can attract users' attention and increase the likelihood of engagement, indicating that the design and visual presentation of social media content play an important role in stimulating user responses. More recently, Bourguignon et al., (2025) found that the use and effectiveness of social media content strategies vary across social media platforms and that different message strategies can generate different levels of engagement. Taken together, these findings provide support for the present result by indicating that the characteristics, visual presentation, and strategic design of social media content are important factors in stimulating audience engagement. In the context of TikTok

Shop, creative content may therefore help MSMEs capture users' attention and encourage them to interact with commercial content through likes, comments, shares, and other forms of engagement.

The findings can also be explained by the nature of short form video commerce, where users continuously scroll through large volumes of competing content. Gong & Liu, (2024) found that content creativity in Douyin based interest driven e-commerce, particularly through relevance and divergence, influences consumers' responses and subsequent purchase related behavior. Although their dependent variable was impulse buying rather than engagement, their findings indicate that creative content creates stronger psychological responses toward social commerce platforms.

Therefore, the significant effect found in this study suggests that content creativity functions as an important stimulus that encourages users to interact with MSME content on TikTok Shop. For MSMEs, originality, storytelling, visual quality, relevance, and emotional appeal are not merely aesthetic characteristics but strategic mechanisms for generating likes, comments, shares, longer viewing, and product clicks. This result extends previous research by applying the creativity engagement relationship specifically to MSMEs operating through TikTok Shop, thereby providing evidence that creative content remains an important mechanism for stimulating digital engagement in short-form social commerce.

Social Proof on Engagement

The findings show that social proof significantly affects Engagement. The positive relationship between social proof and engagement indicates that visible evidence of other users' responses can stimulate greater involvement with TikTok Shop content. Social proof provides users with information about the popularity and acceptance of products through likes, comments, shares, reviews, ratings, purchase numbers, and influencer support. This finding is strongly aligned with , Huang et al., (2025), who examined social proof directly in short form video commerce using Douyin data. Their results demonstrated that the quantity

and quality of social proof significantly influence consumer responses in short form video advertising, while their theoretical discussion explicitly connects social proof with consumer engagement by signaling product popularity and credibility.

This finding is also consistent with research on social commerce engagement. The positive and significant effect of social proof on engagement indicates that visible social cues, such as likes, comments, and other indicators of collective approval, can encourage users to respond more actively to digital content. This finding is consistent Kong & Lou, (2026), who demonstrated that social proof can enhance consumer engagement with sponsored social media content by functioning as a heuristic cue that provides users with social validation. Similarly, Huang et al., (2025) found that the quantity of social proof, particularly the number of likes and comments, positively influences consumer responses in short form video driven e-commerce, highlighting the importance of visible social signals in shaping users' responses in social commerce environments. Furthermore, Hu et al., (2018) found that social proof significantly increased public participation in an experimental study, indicating that observing the behavior or participation of others can encourage individuals to become more actively involved. Taken together, these findings suggest that social proof can provide users with signals of popularity, acceptance, and collective approval, which may stimulate greater attention and behavioral responses. In the context of TikTok Shop, social proof may therefore strengthen engagement by signaling that products or content have received attention and approval from other users through likes, comments, shares, reviews, and other visible forms of social validation.

Thus, the significant effect of social proof found in this study suggests that MSME audiences do not evaluate TikTok Shop content solely from the information provided by the seller, but also from visible reactions and validation provided by other users. When a product receives substantial likes, comments, shares, positive reviews, high ratings, purchases, or influencer endorsement, these signals can create perceptions that the product is popular and worthy of attention. Consequently, social proof can stimulate users to interact further with

content, including liking, commenting, sharing, watching, and clicking on products. This finding strengthens the argument that social proof is an important social mechanism underlying engagement in TikTok Shop.

Content Creativity on MSME Sales Performance

The findings reveal that content creativity has direct effect on Sales Performance. The positive effect of content creativity on MSME sales performance demonstrates that creative content is not only useful for attracting attention but can also contribute to commercial outcomes. Creative content allows MSMEs to communicate product benefits in ways that are distinctive, memorable, emotionally appealing, and relevant to consumers. Gong & Liu, (2024) found that content creativity in interest based e-commerce, particularly in the Douyin environment, significantly influences consumer responses and creates an urge toward impulse buying. Their findings are particularly relevant because Douyin represents the Chinese short form video ecosystem corresponding closely to TikTok's commercial environment.

Further support comes from Wang et al., (2026), who found that an optimally distinctive social media content strategy combining novelty and conformity improves attentiveness, credibility, and persuasion. Although this research focuses more broadly on social media marketing, its findings demonstrate that distinctive content can generate stronger persuasive outcomes. Similarly, Shuqair et al., (2024) found that social media content characteristics and emotional congruence influence engagement and purchase intentions in influencer based online selling. These findings suggest that creative and appropriately designed digital content can translate attention and psychological responses into purchase-related outcomes.

The current finding therefore indicates that creative TikTok Shop content can contribute directly to MSME sales performance by making products more noticeable, persuasive, and memorable in a crowded digital marketplace. For MSMEs, originality and

relevance are particularly important because small businesses often compete with larger brands that possess greater advertising resources. Creative content enables MSMEs to compensate for limited resources by producing distinctive communication that can stimulate consumer interest and purchase responses. The finding extends existing research by linking content creativity directly to sales performance at the MSME level, rather than focusing only on consumer attitudes or purchase intention.

Social Proof on MSME Sales Performance

The results demonstrate that social proof significantly influences sales performance. The positive effect of social proof on MSME sales performance demonstrates that social validation can translate into tangible commercial outcomes. Consumers frequently use information about other users' behavior to evaluate whether a product is trustworthy, popular, and worth purchasing. This is particularly relevant in TikTok Shop because information such as likes, comments, ratings, reviews, purchase counts, and influencer recommendations is highly visible. Huang et al., (2025) provide particularly strong support, showing that the quantity of social proof, including likes and comments, has a significant positive effect on impulse buying in short form video commerce.

The results demonstrate that social proof significantly influences MSME sales performance, indicating that visible social validation translates into tangible commercial outcomes. At the firm level, this finding aligns closely with Vieira et al., (2022), who examined owned and earned social media activities across 4,107 observations from 615 retailers and proved that visible social interactions such as comments, fan following, and organic engagement directly increase retailers' sales. Similar firm-level evidence is provided by Matosas-López, (2024) and C. Gong & Ribiere, (2021), who underscore that digital social validation and electronic word of mouth serve as critical commercial signals that strengthen small business competitiveness and revenue generation.

To understand why MSME owners perceive higher sales performance from these signals, it is necessary to bridge consumer level behavior with firm level outcomes. On TikTok Shop, metrics such as likes, comments, ratings, reviews, purchase counts, and influencer endorsements are highly visible to buyers. Consumer level studies, such as Huang et al., (2025) on short form video commerce and Q. Wang et al., (2025) on peripheral social cues in live commerce, show that these signals reduce perceived risk and trigger consumer impulse buying. Aggregated across numerous transactions, this individual consumer confidence accelerates the transition from product exposure to checkout, which MSME owners subsequently observe and report as improved overall sales volume and business performance.

Nevertheless, adopting a critical perspective reveals that the commercial impact of social proof is not universally guaranteed and can yield divergent outcomes. Prior literature suggests that excessive or overly uniform positive ratings may trigger consumer skepticism regarding review authenticity, while negative comments or low ratings can actively erode trust and depress sales. Furthermore, in highly competitive social commerce environments, social proof alone may fail to sustain sales performance if it is not backed by competitive pricing, product quality, and reliable fulfillment. Even so, for resource constrained MSMEs, authentic social proof remains a vital, cost effective mechanism to build market credibility without relying heavily on paid advertising.

Engagement on MSME Sales Performance

The positive effect of engagement on MSME sales performance indicates that interaction with TikTok Shop content can translate into business outcomes. Engagement represents more than passive exposure because likes, comments, shares, viewing completion, and product clicks reflect different degrees of consumer involvement with the content and product. This finding is strongly supported by Matosas-López, (2024), who examined 100 SMEs over an eight year period and found that social media customer engagement could

predict operating revenue under certain social media management conditions. This provides direct evidence that engagement can have a meaningful relationship with an SME's financial performance.

The finding is further supported by X. Wang et al., (2026), who developed and validated a social commerce model explaining how social commerce generates business outcomes through customer engagement. Their study specifically emphasizes customer engagement as the mechanism through which social commerce activities translate into business outcomes. Similarly, Cheng et al., (2021) demonstrated that firm generated social media content stimulates consumer digital engagement and that engagement mediates the effects of content on firm sales performance. Thus, engagement is not simply a communication outcome but can function as an important bridge between social media activity and firm-level performance.

The current finding suggests that MSMEs can improve sales performance when TikTok users move beyond merely viewing content and become actively involved with it. Likes and comments can signal interest, shares expand content reach, completion reflects sustained attention, and product clicks indicate movement toward commercial consideration. As these behaviors increase, the probability of conversion into transactions may also increase. Therefore, engagement represents an important behavioral mechanism through which TikTok Shop activities can generate sales volume, transaction frequency, turnover, conversion, and new customer acquisition.

Engagement mediates the effect of Content Creativity on MSME Sales Performance

The significant mediation effect of engagement indicates that the influence of content creativity on sales performance occurs not only directly but also through the ability of creative content to stimulate consumer engagement. Creative content attracts attention and encourages consumers to interact with the content, while these interactions increase the likelihood of further product consideration and purchase. This mechanism is strongly

supported by Cheng et al., (2021), who demonstrated that firm generated content affects consumer digital engagement and that engagement mediates the impact of different forms of firm-generated content on firm sales performance. Their findings provide direct empirical support for the fundamental logic of the current mediation hypothesis.

Additional support comes from Gong & Liu, (2024), who found that content creativity in interest based e-commerce influences consumer purchase related behavior through psychological mechanisms. Their study demonstrates that relevant and divergent content can stimulate positive consumer responses and ultimately encourage impulsive purchase behavior. Although their mediating variables differ from the engagement construct used in the current study, the findings reinforce the argument that creative content does not automatically generate commercial outcomes; rather, creative stimuli activate intermediate consumer responses that subsequently contribute to purchasing behavior.

More recent evidence from X. Wang et al., (2026) further strengthens this mechanism by demonstrating that social commerce generates business outcomes through customer engagement. Similarly, research on digital content marketing shows that relevant content can stimulate engagement and subsequently generate sales related outcomes. Thus, the current finding indicates that content creativity becomes commercially valuable when it succeeds in converting attention into active engagement. In other words, creative content alone is insufficient; its commercial effect is strengthened when users like, comment, share, watch, and click on the content. This finding provides an important explanation of *how* creative content contributes to MSME sales performance and supports the proposed viral marketing mechanism.

Engagement mediates the effect of Social Proof on MSME Sales Performance

The significant mediation effect of engagement suggests that social proof contributes to MSME sales performance partly because visible social validation encourages consumers to become more involved with TikTok Shop content. Likes, comments, reviews, ratings,

purchase counts, and influencer support provide signals that a product has received attention and acceptance from other users. These signals can stimulate engagement, and engagement subsequently creates greater opportunities for product consideration and purchase. Huang et al., (2025) provide particularly relevant evidence in short form video commerce by showing that social proof influences consumer behavioral responses and purchase related outcomes, while their theoretical discussion explicitly links social proof to engagement and subsequent purchase intention.

This mechanism is also consistent with Gvili & Levy, (2023), who found that eWOM engagement in social commerce influences purchase intention through an underlying psychological mechanism. Their three experimental studies demonstrate that behavioral engagement with eWOM can change trust perceptions, which subsequently increase purchase intention. Although trust was the mediator in their model rather than engagement, the findings demonstrate that social interaction and sharing behavior can create downstream effects on purchase related outcomes in social commerce. In addition, Hajli et al., (2017) found that review related and seller related factors influence trust and purchase intention in social commerce, reinforcing the role of socially generated information as an important pathway toward purchasing behavior.

The mediation result therefore indicates that social proof does not influence MSME sales performance solely through direct persuasion; its commercial value is amplified when social validation stimulates active user engagement. When users see positive reviews, high ratings, purchase counts, and strong social interactions, they may become more attentive to the content, interact with it, share it, or click the product. These engagement behaviors increase the opportunity for subsequent conversion into purchases. Consequently, engagement represents an important behavioral mechanism connecting social proof with sales performance and provides a more comprehensive explanation of how viral marketing operates within TikTok Shop.

5. Conclusion

Content Creativity This study confirms that Content Creativity (CC) and Social Proof (SP) have positive and significant direct effects on Engagement (ENG) and Perceived Sales Performance (SPF) among MSMEs in Jambi. Furthermore, Engagement (ENG) directly enhances Perceived Sales Performance and acts as a significant complementary partial mediator connecting Content Creativity and Social Proof with MSME sales outcomes. Content creativity functions as the primary driver of digital engagement, while social proof serves as a critical trust-building mechanism that accelerates consumer purchase evaluation on TikTok Shop.

From a theoretical perspective, this research enriches the social commerce literature by validating an integrated cross level framework combining the Resource Based View (RBV) and Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) model. Rather than viewing viral marketing as a standalone single metric, these findings demonstrate that viral marketing operates as a structural mechanism where internal content capabilities and external social validation trigger active consumer engagement, which subsequently translates into improved perceived sales performance.

From a practical perspective, MSMEs in Jambi should prioritize strategic content originality and visual storytelling quality over repetitive hard-selling promotions. Given that content creativity exhibited the strongest direct influence, business owners should focus on demonstrating real world product usage and authentic storytelling. Additionally, sellers should actively leverage social proof by encouraging verified customer reviews, displaying real buyer testimonials, and maintaining high product rating scores to build instant credibility. Rather than seeking passive content exposure, MSMEs must optimize interactive content features (such as call-to-action prompts, comments, and product clicks) to foster active consumer engagement.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this study has several limitations that suggest avenues for future research. First, this study utilized a cross sectional design with purposive sampling restricted to MSMEs in Jambi City, which limits the generalizability of the findings across other geographical regions or larger corporate contexts. Second, data were collected using single source self reported questionnaires from MSME owners/managers, which measures perceived sales performance rather than objective transaction records or actual financial logs from the TikTok Shop Seller Center.

Future research should consider employing a longitudinal research design to capture the dynamic temporal effects of viral marketing campaigns over time. Researchers are also encouraged to collect objective sales data (such as actual revenue figures or backend store analytics) or combine survey data with consumer side behavioral metrics. Finally, future studies could extend this model by incorporating additional contextual moderators, such as product category complexity, price sensitivity, or live streaming marketing frequency.

6. Acknowledgement

The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, through the BIMA Program - Beginner Lecturer Research Grant (Penelitian Dosen Pemula / PDP) submitted in 2025 and implemented in 2026.

7. References

Alfath, F., & Faruqi, F. (2023). Content Marketing, Social Ads, and Purchase Intention: The Role of Customer Engagement on Erigo's TikTok. *Ikonomia;Jurnal Manajemen*, *19*, 8966. https://doi.org/DOI http://dx.doi.org/10.47313/oikonomia.v19i2.1817.

Amblee, N., & Bui, T. (2011). Harnessing the Influence of Social Proof in Online Shopping: The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Sales of Digital Microproducts. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, *16*(2), 91–114. https://doi.org/10.2753/JEC1086-4415160205.

Azzaakiyyah, H. K., & Rijal, S. (2025). Integration of Discount Strategies , Digital Promotion , and Cus- tomer Engagement in Enhancing MSME Competitiveness in the E-Commerce Ecosystem During Ramadan. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, *3*(1), 330–337. https://doi.org/10.61100/tacit.v3i1.256.

Bo, S., Liu, X., Tang, M., & Zhu, S. (2025). The impact of short video content marketing on consumers' purchase intentio: Based on Informational content and entertainment content. *Dean and Francis*, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.61173/wycgmg82.

Bourguignon, B., Terho, H., & Hajjem, A. (2025). How B2B social media content strategies generate engagement across different social media platforms. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *125*, 413–430. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2025.01.019.

Cheng, M., Liu, J., Qi, J., & Wan, F. (2021). Differential effects of firm generated content on consumer digital engagement and firm performance: An outside-in perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *98*, 41–58. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2021.07.001.

Chin, W. T., & Ooi, Z. L. (2024). Discussions of How Short form Videos Influences Towards the Purchase Intention of Consumers. *Media and Communication Frontiers*, 1–7. https://doi.org/doi:10.64229/pqq7jk79.

Dou, Z., & Zhang, Y. (2023). The Influence of Short Video Advertisements on Consumers ' Purchase Intention. *Journal of Education Humanites and Social Sciences*, *13*, 269–274. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54097/ehss.v13i.7912.

Dwidienawati, D., Tjahjana, D., Bramantoro, S., & Gandasari, D. (2020). *Heliyon Customer review or in fl uencer endorsement : which one in fl uences purchase intention more ?*

6(November). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e05543

Febrianti, D., Purwaamijaya, B. M., & Prehanto, A. (2024). *Journal of Investment, Development, Economics and Accounting* ©. 208–219.

Ferdianto, R., Nurcahyo, S. A., Noviati, E. R., & Aisyah, S. (2024). *TikTok Made Me Buy It : Analyzing the Influence of Content Marketing and Engagement on Generation Z ' s Purchase Intention*. *2*(2), 103–112. https://doi.org/10.59631/sshs.v2i2.258.

Gao, Y., & Wu, S. (2024). The Effect of Short Video Advertisements on Consumers ' Purchase Intention. *Highlights in Business, Economics and Management*, *30*, 276–283. https://doi.org/DOI:10.54097/adda5k21.

Gilbert Johan Martin Sinaga. (2025). Social Media and Market Orientation in SMEs Performance : Competitive Advantage as Mediating Factor Gilbert Johan Martin Sinaga Universitas Riau , Indonesia. *Kinerja*, *29*, 91–113. https://doi.org/doi:10.24002/kinerja.v29i1.9519.

Gong, C., & Ribiere, V. (2021). Developing a unified definition of digital transformation. *Technovation*, *102*, 102217. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2020.102217.

Gong, M., & Liu, H. (2024). Understanding impulse buying in interest-based e-commerce: the role of content creativity. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *53*(2), 182–198. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-07-2023-0484.

Gvili, Y., & Levy, S. (2023). I Share, Therefore I Trust: A moderated mediation model of the influence of eWOM engagement on social commerce. *Journal of Business Research*, *166*, 114131. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114131.

Hair, oseph F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). Multivariate Data Analysis. In *Mathematics of Computation* (Vol. 50, Issue 181). https://doi.org/10.2307/2007941.

Hajli, N., Sims, J., Zadeh, A. H., & Richard, M.-O. (2017). A social commerce investigation

of the role of trust in a social networking site on purchase intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, *71*, 133–141. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.10.004.

Haque, M. G. (2020). *The Effect of Digital Marketing and Media Promotion Utilization to a Bakpia Patok Yogyakarta SMES ' Sales Performance*. *10*(1), 233–242. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26858/jiap.v10i1.14336.

Harrison-Walker, L. J., & Jiang, Y. (2023). Suspicion of online product reviews as fake: Cues and consequences. *Journal of Business Research*, *160*, 113780. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113780.

Hu, S., Li, Z., Zhang, J., & Zhu, J. (2018). Engaging scientists in science communication: The effect of social proof and meaning. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *170*, 1044–1051. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.09.210.

Huang, W., Wang, X., Zhang, Q., Han, J., & Zhang, R. (2025). Beyond likes and comments: How social proof influences consumer impulse buying on short-form video platforms. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *84*, 104199. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.104199.

Kanuri, V. K., Hughes, C., & Hodges, B. T. (2024). Standing out from the crowd: When and why color complexity in social media images increases user engagement. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *41*(2), 174–193. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2023.08.007.

Kong, J., & Lou, C. (2026). Beyond persuasion Knowledge: Examining the roles of visual appeal, visual congruence, and social proof in influencer advertising. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *88*, 104502. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2025.104502.

Lee, J., & Hong, I. B. (2016). Predicting positive user responses to social media advertising: The roles of emotional appeal, informativeness, and creativity. *International Journal of Information Management*, *36*(3), 360–373. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2016.01.001.

Liu, Y., & Wang, M. (2023). *The Effect of Short Video Content Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention*. *11*(3). https://doi.org/doi:10.54097/fbem.v11i3.12934.

Matosas-López, L. (2024). Can customer engagement in social media be used as a predictor of operating revenue in SMEs? *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, *10*(4), 100380. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joitmc.2024.100380.

Meliawati, T., Gerald, S. C., & Aruman, A. E. (2023). *The Effect of Social Media Marketing TikTok and Product Quality Towards Purchase Intention*. *8*, 77–92. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29244/jcs.8.1.77-92 Received.

Mohamed, I. A., & Liang, P. X. (2025). Evaluating the Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Growth and Performance of Small and Medium - Sized Enterprises (SMEs). *International Journal of Emerging Multidisciplinaries: Social Science*, *4*(2), 1–28. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54938/ijemdss.2025.04.2.520.

Novandari, W., Gunawan, D. S., Bawono, I. R., & Naufalin, R. (2023). *Social Media Adoption and SMEs Business Performance : Examining Entrepreneurship Orientation and Government Support Policies in Central Java*. *24*(June), 57–67. https://doi.org/10.21512/tw.v24i1.9262.

Odoom, R., Anning-Dorson, T., & Acheampong, G. (2017). Antecedents of Social Media Usage and Performance Benefits in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, *30*(3), 383–399. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-04-2016-0088.

Pathak, A. A., & Kaushik, K. (2024). Driving consumer engagement for digital payment brands: Content strategy on instagram. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *79*, 103821. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.103821.

Patricy, A. N., & Dewi, C. K. (2025). Social Media and Planned Behaviour: Impact on TikTok Purchase Intentions. *Indonesian Journal of Business Analytics (IJBA)*, *5*(3), 2525–2542. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55927/ijba.v5i3.14610.

Pratama, A.M., Subagja, G., Duta, L. . (2023). *Influence Of Tiktok's Social Media Marketing and Online Consumer Review On Purchasing Decision*. *10*(1), 45–54. https://doi.org/doi:10.26905/jbm.v10i1.10131.

Safitri, D. E. (2025). The Influence of Viral Marketing and Consumer Engagement on Purchase Intention of Fashion Products on Tiktok Shop. *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IIJSE)*, *8*(3), 9752–9767. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31538/iijse.v8i3.7816.

Sari, M., Septrizarty, R., Farlina, W., Kahar, A., & Nurofik, A. (2023). Analisis Strategi Bisnis UMKM melalui Pemanfaatan Media Sosial Tiktok Shop. *Journal of Economics and Management Scienties*, 160–168. https://doi.org/10.37034/jems.v5i3.18.

Schivinski, B., Christodoulides, G., & Dabrowski, D. (2016). Measuring Consumers' Engagement With Brand-Related Social-Media Content. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *56*(1), 64–80. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2016-004.

Shuqair, S., Filieri, R., Viglia, G., Mattila, A. S., & Costa Pinto, D. (2024). Leveraging online selling through social media influencers. *Journal of Business Research*, *171*, 114391. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114391.

Smith, R. E., MacKenzie, S. B., Yang, X., Buchholz, L. M., & Darley, W. K. (2007). Modeling the Determinants and Effects of Creativity in Advertising. *Marketing Science*, *26*(6), 819–833. https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.1070.0272.

Syaifullah, J., Syaifudin, M., Sukendar, M. U., & Junaedi, J. (2021a). Social Media Marketing and Business Performance of MSMEs During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, *8*(2), 523–531. https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2021.vol8.no2.0523.

Syaifullah, J., Syaifudin, M., Sukendar, M. U., & Junaedi, J. (2021b). Social Media Marketing and Business Performance of MSMEs During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, *8*, 523–531. https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2021.vol8.no2.0523.

Vieira, V. A., de Almeida, M. I. S., & Schreiner, T. F. (2022). Amplifying retailers' sales with a hub's owned and earned social media: The moderating role of marketplace organic search. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *101*, 165–175. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2021.12.012.

Wang, F., Yang, L., Wang, S., Wang, F., & Zhang, M. (2026). Standing out while fitting in: content strategy and performance in social media marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, *216*, 116360. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2026.116360.

Wang, Q., Yao, X., Li, X., Yan, X., & Li, R. (2025). When peripheral route meets central route: An elaboration likelihood model of sales performance in live commerce. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *84*, 104218. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.104218.

Wang, X., Lin, X., & Shao, B. (2026). Social commerce model for business outcomes: Validated structure–conduct–outcome framework using mixed methods design. *Information & Management*, *63*(2), 104280. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2025.104280.

Wardati, N. K., & ER, M. (2019). The Impact of Social Media Usage on the Sales Process in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): A Systematic Literature Review. *Procedia Computer Science*, *161*, 976–983. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2019.11.207.

Xiao, Y., Wang, L., & Wang, P. (2019a). *Research on the Influence of Content Features of Short Video Marketing on Consumer purchase intentions*. *351*(Mmetss), 415–422.

Xiao, Y., Wang, L., & Wang, P. (2019b). *Research on the Influence of Content Features of Short Video Marketing on Consumer purchase intentions BT - Proceedings of the 2019 4th International Conference on Modern Management, Education Technology and Social Science (MMETSS 2019)*. 415–422. https://doi.org/10.2991/mmetss-19.2019.82.

Yang, H., & Zhan, X. (2025). *The Influence of Brand Cognition and Purchase Intention in Short Video Marketing to Consumers*. *21*(2).

https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54097/qafyqf58.

Zhang, W., Zhang, W., & Daim, T. U. (2023). Investigating consumer purchase intention in online social media marketing: A case study of Tiktok. *Technology in Society*, *74*, 102289. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2023.102289.

Zulstra, D. (2025). *The Effect of Digital Marketing Strategy , Price , and Product Quality on Sales Performance : Evidence from Rendang Cipuik GG SMEs in Indonesia*. *December*, 1–12. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55606/jumbiku.v5i3.5916.