

The Influence of Hedonic Value, Symbolic Value, and Utilitarian Value on Customer Engagement with Trust in Sellers as a Mediating Variable in TikTok Shop Live Streaming

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of hedonic, symbolic, and utilitarian value on customer engagement in TikTok Shop live streaming, with trust in sellers as a mediating variable. A quantitative causal design was applied to 155 active Universitas Lampung students who had watched and purchased through TikTok Shop live streaming. Data were collected using a five-point Likert questionnaire and analyzed with PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4, supported by descriptive and normality analyses in SPSS. The results show that hedonic and symbolic value positively and significantly affect customer engagement, while utilitarian value does not. Trust in sellers significantly mediates the effect of symbolic value, but not hedonic or utilitarian value.

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has changed the way consumers search for information, interact with sellers, and purchase products online. The growth of internet use in Indonesia has accelerated the development of social commerce, in which social interaction, product discovery, and transactions are integrated within digital platforms. Live streaming commerce represents an important extension of this development because sellers can present products in real time, respond to questions, and create two-way communication during the shopping process. This format is particularly relevant to younger consumers who are accustomed to interactive digital environments and who may view shopping not only as a functional activity but also as entertainment and social participation.

In the Indonesian market, live streaming has become part of the competitive strategy of e-commerce and social commerce platforms. TikTok Shop combines real-time product presentation with interactive communication and entertainment-oriented content. In this context, customer engagement can emerge through behaviors such as commenting, liking, sharing, following sellers, revisiting live sessions, and purchasing products. The live environment therefore creates a setting in which perceived value may influence not only purchase decisions but also the broader quality and intensity of customer participation.

Customer responses to live streaming can be understood through the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework of Mehrabian and Russell (1974). In this study, hedonic, symbolic, and utilitarian value represent external stimuli received by consumers during live streaming. Hedonic value reflects enjoyment and positive emotional experience, symbolic value reflects identity and social meaning, while utilitarian value reflects practical benefits and efficiency. Trust in sellers represents the internal psychological condition that links those stimuli to customer responses, and customer engagement represents the behavioral response. This framework is also consistent with Service-Dominant Logic, which emphasizes that value is created through interaction between providers and consumers rather than being embedded solely in a product (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008).

Trust is especially important in live streaming because consumers cannot fully inspect products or directly observe sellers before purchase. Credibility, integrity, transparency, and responsiveness can reduce uncertainty and increase consumers' willingness to interact with sellers. At the same time, engagement is broader than purchasing because it can include cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses toward a seller or brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014). This makes customer engagement a relevant outcome for live streaming research, where the interaction itself is part of the consumption experience.

Previous research has shown that perceived values can influence trust, engagement, and purchase-related outcomes in live-streaming commerce. Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020), for example, found that symbolic value can affect engagement directly and through trust in sellers, while utilitarian and hedonic values may operate through trust mechanisms. Other studies have reported that utilitarian, hedonic, and social values can shape trust or purchase intentions, although their effects are not always consistent across platforms and

consumer groups (Wu & Huang, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024; Leong et al., 2024). These differences suggest that the mechanism linking perceived value, trust, and engagement may depend on the specific context of the platform and the characteristics of its users.

Despite the growing literature, studies that simultaneously integrate hedonic, symbolic, and utilitarian value with trust in sellers and customer engagement in TikTok Shop live streaming remain limited, particularly for Indonesian university students. The present study addresses this gap by testing the three value dimensions simultaneously within an SOR-based framework and by examining trust in sellers as a mediating mechanism. The study aims to determine the direct effects of hedonic, symbolic, and utilitarian value on customer engagement and to test whether trust in sellers mediates these relationships.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Stimulus–Organism–Response Theory

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed SOR to explain how environmental stimuli influence an individual's internal psychological state before producing a behavioral response. In this research, hedonic value, symbolic value, and utilitarian value are positioned as stimuli because they arise from the consumer's perception of the live-streaming shopping experience. Trust in the seller represents the organism, namely an internal evaluative state related to credibility, integrity, and reliability. Customer engagement is the response reflected in active interaction with the seller and the live-streaming content.

Service-Dominant Logic

Service-Dominant Logic views value as something that is co-created through interaction rather than simply transferred through a product transaction (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Vargo and Lusch (2008) further emphasize that customers participate in value creation and determine value through their own experiences. This perspective is relevant to TikTok Shop live streaming because sellers and consumers interact directly, and the perceived value of the experience can be emotional, symbolic, and functional.

Hedonic, symbolic, and utilitarian value

Hedonic value refers to recreational, emotional, and pleasurable benefits obtained from shopping experiences (Babin et al., 1994). Symbolic value relates to social meaning, identity expression, lifestyle, and the way products represent the self (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993; Cova, 1997; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Utilitarian value reflects functional and instrumental benefits such as useful information, convenience, time savings, and efficiency (Gan & Wang, 2017). In live streaming, these three forms of value may coexist and shape how consumers perceive and respond to the seller and the shopping environment.

Trust in sellers and customer engagement

Trust in sellers is the consumer's belief that a seller is capable, honest, and benevolent in an online transaction, even when the consumer cannot directly supervise the seller (Corbitt et al., 2003). Customer engagement refers to active interaction and connection with a firm's or brand's offerings beyond the act of purchasing (Vivek et al., 2014). In digital environments, engagement may be manifested through comments, likes, sharing, following, revisiting content, and recommendations (Gummerus et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

H1: Hedonic value has a positive effect on customer engagement.

H2: Symbolic value has a positive effect on customer engagement.

H3: Utilitarian value has a positive effect on customer engagement.

H4a: Trust in sellers mediates the effect of hedonic value on customer engagement.

H4b: Trust in sellers mediates the effect of symbolic value on customer engagement.

H4c: Trust in sellers mediates the effect of utilitarian value on customer engagement.

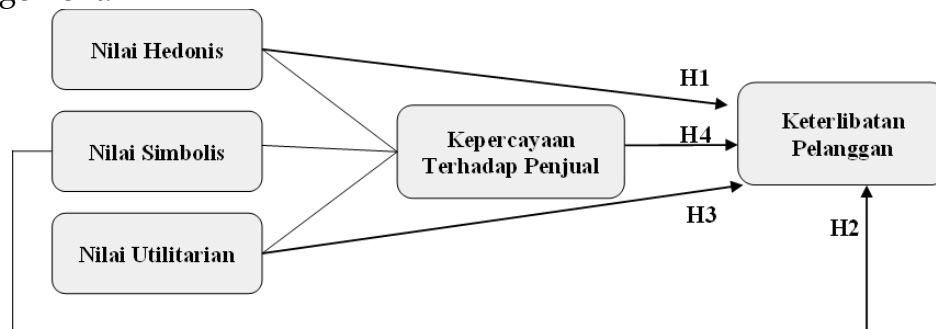


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative causal design to examine the relationships among hedonic value, symbolic value, utilitarian value, trust in sellers, and customer engagement. The research was conducted in the context of TikTok Shop live streaming and focused on active Universitas Lampung students who had watched and purchased through live streaming.

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The population consisted of Universitas Lampung students who had purchased through TikTok Shop live streaming. Non-probability purposive sampling was used with the criteria that respondents were active students, had watched and purchased through TikTok Shop live streaming, and were between 15 and 30 years old. Based on the 31 questionnaire items and the sampling rule used in the thesis, 155 respondents were obtained. All 155 returned questionnaires were usable.

Data analysis used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4, while SPSS was used for descriptive statistics and the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test. The measurement model was assessed through convergent validity and construct reliability. The

structural model was assessed through R^2 , while direct and indirect effects were tested using bootstrapping. A path was considered significant when t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and p-value was below 0.05.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	99	63.87%
Gender	Male	56	36.13%
Age	<18 years	6	3.87%
Age	19–21 years	94	60.65%
Age	22–24 years	53	34.19%
Age	>25 years	2	1.29%
Watching frequency	Rarely	18	11.61%
Watching frequency	Sometimes	49	31.61%
Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Watching frequency	Often	59	38.06%
Watching frequency	Very often	29	18.71%
Prior purchase	Yes	146	94.19%
Prior purchase	No	9	5.81%

The respondents were predominantly female and were concentrated in the 19–21 year age group. Most respondents watched TikTok Shop live streaming often or very often, and nearly all had prior experience purchasing through live streaming. These characteristics are consistent with the study's focus on active young consumers in social-commerce environments.

RESULTS

A total of 155 questionnaires were distributed and all 155 were returned and usable, resulting in a 100% response rate. The sample therefore met the minimum respondent requirement described in the research design. The measurement model showed acceptable convergent validity and reliability. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were 0.534 for hedonic value, 0.503 for symbolic value, 0.523 for utilitarian value, 0.681 for trust in sellers, and 0.504 for customer engagement. All values exceeded the 0.50 criterion. Construct reliability was also adequate, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.695 to 0.876 and Composite Reliability values ranging from 0.704 to 0.878. The lowest reliability values occurred for utilitarian value, but remained above the minimum criteria used in the thesis.

The structural model produced an R^2 of 0.722 for customer engagement, indicating that hedonic value, symbolic value, utilitarian value, and trust in sellers jointly explained 72.2% of the variance in customer engagement. The R^2 for trust in sellers was 0.472, indicating that hedonic, symbolic, and utilitarian

value jointly explained 47.2% of its variance. The normality test produced an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.014, indicating non-normal residuals; however, this did not prevent the PLS-SEM analysis because multivariate normality is not a prerequisite for PLS-SEM.

Table 2. Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	Hedonic Value → Customer Engagement	0.198	2.318	0.021	Supported
H2	Symbolic Value → Customer Engagement	0.414	3.178	0.001	Supported
H3	Utilitarian Value → Customer Engagement	0.047	0.509	0.611	Not Supported

The direct-effect results show that hedonic value has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement, while symbolic value has a stronger positive and significant effect. Utilitarian value does not have a significant direct effect on customer engagement.

Table 3. Indirect Effect Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H4a	Hedonic → Trust → Engagement	0.070	1.483	0.138	Not Supported
H4b	Symbolic → Trust → Engagement	0.130	2.702	0.007	Supported
Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H4c	Utilitarian → Trust → Engagement	0.042	1.331	0.183	Not Supported

The mediation test indicates that trust in sellers significantly mediates only the relationship between symbolic value and customer engagement. The indirect effects of hedonic value and utilitarian value through trust in sellers are not significant.

DISCUSSION

The first finding indicates that hedonic value positively influences customer engagement. Consumers who experience greater enjoyment and entertainment during TikTok Shop live streaming are more likely to pay attention, interact, comment, like, and continue participating in the live session. This result is consistent with SOR theory because pleasurable experiences function as positive stimuli that generate behavioral responses. The finding also aligns with Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020), who showed that hedonic value is relevant to engagement in live-streaming commerce, and with research using an SOR perspective in TikTok live commerce that highlights the role of hedonic experience in consumer responses.

The second finding shows that symbolic value has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement and represents the strongest direct path among the three value dimensions tested. Respondents particularly rated the ability to find products that fit their personal style highly. This indicates that consumers may engage more actively when products and live-streaming content carry personal or social meaning. Symbolic value therefore operates as a stimulus that creates relevance between the product, the consumer's identity, and the social environment of digital shopping. The result is consistent with prior evidence that symbolic value can strengthen engagement and has an important role in live-streaming commerce (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020).

The third finding indicates that utilitarian value does not significantly affect customer engagement, even though the descriptive assessment of utilitarian benefits was relatively high. Consumers may recognize the practical usefulness of live streaming, including real-time product information and easier comparison, but these benefits may already be viewed as a normal part of contemporary e-commerce. As a result, functional usefulness may reduce uncertainty or facilitate decisions without necessarily increasing active interaction. This finding differs from studies that found significant utilitarian effects on engagement or trust, including Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020), Zhang et al. (2024), and Dua (2023). The difference suggests that the dominant driver of engagement in the present sample is more experiential and symbolic than purely functional.

The mediation results provide a more specific explanation of the role of trust in sellers. Trust significantly mediates the effect of symbolic value on customer engagement, but not the effects of hedonic or utilitarian value. Symbolic value is closely linked to identity, social meaning, and the willingness to associate oneself with a seller or product. Such association may require a basic level of trust before symbolic meanings can translate into stronger engagement. In contrast, hedonic value may influence engagement directly through immediate enjoyment, while utilitarian value did not produce a significant direct effect or indirect effect through trust in the present model.

The selective mediation pattern is consistent with the idea that the role of trust depends on the type of value being experienced. Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020) also found an important role for symbolic value and trust in explaining engagement, although the pathways for hedonic and utilitarian value

differ from the present study. The differences may reflect platform characteristics and respondent profiles. The present study focuses specifically on TikTok Shop and Universitas Lampung students, whereas earlier studies examined broader live-commerce settings. Overall, the results support an SOR explanation in which perceived values can stimulate customer responses through different psychological pathways rather than through a single uniform mechanism.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that hedonic value and symbolic value positively and significantly influence customer engagement in TikTok Shop live streaming. Symbolic value exerts the strongest direct effect among the three value dimensions. Utilitarian value does not significantly influence customer engagement. Trust in sellers significantly mediates the relationship between symbolic value and customer engagement, but does not significantly mediate the relationships involving hedonic and utilitarian value. The model explains 72.2% of the variance in customer engagement and 47.2% of the variance in trust in sellers.

For practitioners, the findings suggest that TikTok Shop sellers should design live sessions that are entertaining, warm, and socially engaging rather than relying only on hard selling. Sellers can also emphasize products that fit customers' lifestyles and identities and use testimonials, comments, and transparent communication to strengthen trust. While utilitarian information remains necessary, it should be integrated into an engaging presentation rather than treated as the sole basis of interaction.

FURTHER STUDY

The study is limited by its focus on Universitas Lampung students and the use of non-probability online sampling, which restricts broad generalization. The model also includes only three value dimensions and trust in sellers, leaving additional variance unexplained. The cross-sectional, self-report design does not capture changes in consumer perceptions over time. Future studies should include more diverse universities and age groups, add variables such as streamer credibility or attractiveness, product-review quality, pricing, or promotion, and consider longitudinal or repeated-exposure designs.

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