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The Influence Of Tiktok Short-Video Affiliate Marketing On Purchase Intention Of MSME Products With Customer Engagement As A Mediating Variable: Stimulus–Organism–Response Approach

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Abstract

Affiliate marketing through short videos on TikTok is rapidly growing as a promotional channel for MSME products, but the psychological mechanisms explaining its influence on purchase intention have not been widely mapped. This study examines the influence of TikTok short-video affiliate marketing on purchase intention of MSME products with customer engagement as a mediating variable, using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. This explanatory quantitative study with a cross-sectional design collected data through an online questionnaire from 213 TikTok users who had viewed affiliate content, selected by purposive sampling, and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The measurement model met the criteria for validity and reliability (outer loading 0.729–0.874; AVE 0.672–0.688; Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability > 0.90). Affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement (β = 0.657; t = 11.697) and purchase intention (β = 0.462; t = 9.275). Customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (β = 0.461; t = 9.022); and customer engagement partially mediates (indirect effect β = 0.303; t = 6.834). The model explains 43.2% of the variance in customer engagement and 70.6% of the variance in purchase intention. These findings suggest that affiliate content needs to be designed to build consumer engagement, not simply reach audiences. Implications for MSMEs and affiliates are discussed.

Keywords:Affiliate Marketing; Customer Engagement; Purchase Intention; Tiktok; Msmes; S–O–R

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INTRODUCTION

Short-form video-based social media has transformed the way consumers discover products and make purchasing decisions. Platforms like TikTok are no longer simply entertainment platforms, but social commerce environments where content, social interactions, and transactions take place in a single experience. A bibliometric review of the past decade has charted the development of social commerce and purchase intention research (Dincer & Dincer, 2023). In Indonesia, the scale of this phenomenon is significant: the Digital 2026: Indonesia report noted that TikTok has an advertising reach of approximately 180 million people, making it the platform with the highest advertising reach in the country (DataReportal, 2026).

This context is crucial for the MSME sector. According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2024), the number of MSMEs exceeded 64.2 million business units, employing approximately 97% of the national workforce and contributing approximately 61% of gross domestic product. However, budget constraints and market access often hinder MSMEs from reaching digital consumers. Short video affiliate marketing, which involves promoting products through affiliate-created content in exchange for a commission on sales, offers a relatively inexpensive and interactive promotional channel. This strategy is increasingly used, but academic understanding of how affiliate content shapes consumer purchase intentions remains limited.

The current literature on short video marketing provides a strong foundation but also leaves gaps. Shen and Wang (2024) introduced the S–O–R framework to the context of short video marketing and demonstrated that perceived creator personas and co-creation of value enhance purchase intention. Jiang and Chen (2025) found that use and gratification and social presence enhance perceived value and attitudes toward short videos, further strengthening digital dependency and purchase intention. Zheng et al. (2025) demonstrated that the influence of social presence on purchase intention among knowledge-based short video users operates through cognitive engagement and expectations. These three studies agree that the influence of short videos on purchase intention operates through internal psychological processes, not simply exposure. However, none of them specifically addressed affiliate content carrying commercial incentives, and none explicitly identified customer engagement as a mediating mechanism.

On the other hand, social commerce research has identified customer engagement as a key variable. Herzallah et al. (2025) tested the S–O–R framework and found that content and service attributes enhance customer engagement, which then strongly predicts repurchase intentions. Busalim et al. (2024) and Li et al. (2023) also focused on the factors shaping customer engagement in social commerce. S–O–

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R studies in Indonesia generally take the context of live streaming and social commerce in general (Chandraa et al., 2024; Huwaida et al., 2024; Imanuddin & Handayani, 2025). Based on the author's literature search, studies that examine the combination of affiliate short videos, MSME products, and customer engagement as mediators in a single model are still very limited.

With this background, this study aims to (1) analyze the influence of TikTok short-video affiliate marketing on customer engagement; (2) analyze the influence of customer engagement on purchase intention; (3) analyze the direct influence of affiliate marketing on purchase intention; and (4) examine the mediating role of customer engagement on MSME products. This study's contributions are threefold. First, this study applies S–O–R to a specific format, namely short affiliate videos. Second, this study positions customer engagement as an organism that explains the process, not as the end result. Third, this study provides empirical evidence from the context of Indonesian MSME products that can be used by business actors and affiliates to design content.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Stimulus–Organism–Response Framework

The S–O–R framework was introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in environmental psychology. This framework states that external stimuli influence the internal state of an individual (organism), and this internal state results in a behavioral reaction (response). In digital marketing research, this framework is used to open the "black box" of consumers' cognitive and affective processes that are not directly observed (Haq et al., 2024; Herzallah et al., 2025). Its application extends to live streaming (Chandraa et al., 2024; Imanuddin & Handayani, 2025), social commerce (Herzallah et al., 2025), and short video marketing (Shen & Wang, 2024). Hewei and Youngsook (2022) also used S–O–R to show that social media interactivity influences continuance purchase intentions through perceived value and immersive experiences.

This study positions TikTok short-video affiliate marketing as the stimulus, customer engagement as the organism, and purchase intention as the response. The choice of S–O–R is justified because affiliate content combines visual, audio, narrative, and commercial elements. Consumer response to this combination likely depends on how engaged they are with the content, not just on its exposure.

TikTok Short-Video Affiliate Marketing as a Stimulus

Affiliate marketing on TikTok is marketing through short videos created by affiliates to promote products by including purchase links, with a commission paid for each transaction. Unlike one-way advertising, affiliate content is personalized and allows for

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interaction through comments, likes, and shares. Shen and Wang (2024) showed that optimizing content creators and video content increases user perceptions of persona and shared values, which in turn increases purchase intention. In affiliate content, the stimulus has an additional layer of commercial motive, which can influence how consumers assess the credibility of the message. In this study, the stimulus was measured through respondents' perceptions of exposure to affiliate content for MSME products, including its ability to introduce products, provide information, attract attention, and influence interest.

Customer Engagement as an Organism

Customer engagement is understood as an individual's level of participation and attachment to content or a platform, encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dimensions (Herzallah et al., 2025). Within the S–O–R framework, customer engagement is an internal state that bridges stimulus and response. Zheng et al. (2025) support this logic in the context of short videos: cognitive engagement was shown to be part of the pathway linking social presence to purchase intention. In this study, customer engagement was measured through attention to content until completion, interest, information-seeking drive, interactions (likes, comments, shares), feelings of involvement, and the habit of rewatching interesting content.

Purchase Intention as Response

Purchase intention is a consumer's tendency to purchase a product after evaluating the information received. Within the S–O–R framework, this construct is a response, the end result of the interaction between a stimulus and the consumer's internal state. This study measures purchase intention, trial interest, purchase consideration, purchase likelihood, increased purchase intention after viewing content, and future purchase intention. This study measures intention, not actual purchases.

Hypothesis Development

Affiliate marketing and customer engagement. Informative and interactive content drives engagement. Lee and Park (2022) confirmed that social media content influences customer engagement, and Herzallah et al. (2025) found that content informativeness was the strongest driver of customer engagement among the attributes they tested. Li et al. (2023) also examined how social interactions shape customer engagement in social commerce. In line with the S–O–R framework, affiliate content as a stimulus is expected to increase engagement. Thus:

H1: TikTok short-video affiliate marketing has a positive impact on customer engagement.

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Customer engagement and purchase intention Herzallah et al. (2025) found that customer engagement strongly predicts repurchase intention in social commerce, and Zheng et al. (2025) showed that cognitive involvement is a pathway to purchase intention among short video users. More engaged consumers tend to have more positive product evaluations and are therefore more likely to intend to purchase. Thus:

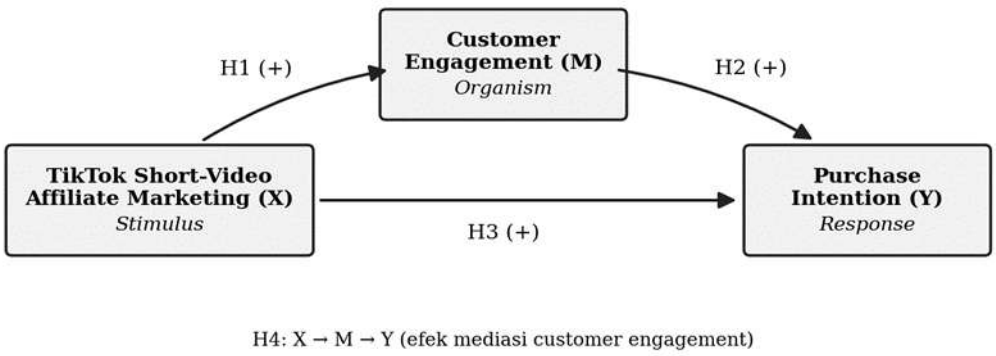
H2: Customer engagement has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Affiliate marketing and purchase intention Shen and Wang (2024) showed that short video marketing increased purchase intentions, and Jiang and Chen (2025) found that perceived value influenced purchase intentions both indirectly and directly. This pattern suggests that stimuli can influence responses directly as well as through mediators. Thus:

H3: TikTok short-video affiliate marketing has a positive effect on purchase intention.

The mediating role of customer engagement Jiang and Chen (2025) demonstrated digital dependency mediation between user experience and purchase intention, while Zheng et al. (2025) found a serial mediation pathway through cognitive engagement. Herzallah et al. (2025) positioned customer engagement as the organism that connects platform attributes with intention. Based on S–O–R logic and this evidence, the influence of affiliate content on purchase intention is suspected to occur in part through consumer engagement. Thus:

H4: Customer engagement mediates the influence of TikTok short-video affiliate marketing on purchase intention.



Source: developed by the author based on the S–O–R framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

Figure 1. Research model

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METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory purpose to test the causal relationship between variables formulated in the S–O–R model. The design used is cross-sectional, meaning data is collected once in a period, because the focus of the study is respondents' perceptions and experiences of affiliate content at a single point in time.

Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The research population was TikTok users in Indonesia who had been exposed to short-video affiliate marketing content. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique based on the following criteria: (1) active TikTok users, (2) having viewed short-video affiliate marketing content, and (3) having interacted with the content, such as liking, commenting, sharing, or clicking on product links. Data were collected through an online questionnaire (Google Form) distributed via social media and instant messaging applications on [month–year of data collectionA total of 213 respondents met the criteria and were analyzed. With 18 indicators, a rule of thumb of 5–10 times the number of indicators yields a minimum requirement of 90–180 respondents, thus the sample size is considered adequate for the model being tested.Add respondent's informed consent statement and ethical approval, if any]

Instruments and Measurement of Variables

The instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Each construct was measured by six reflective indicators, resulting in a total of 18 indicators (list of statements in Table 2). The constructs were operationally defined by referring to the literature on short video marketing (Shen & Wang, 2024; Jiang & Chen, 2025) and customer engagement in social commerce (Herzallah et al., 2025; Busalim et al., 2024), then adapted to the context of TikTok affiliates and MSME products.Please state the source of the questionnaire item adaptation and the results of the pilot test, if conducted.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS[versionPLS-SEM was chosen because it is suitable for models with latent constructs, can test direct and indirect effects simultaneously, does not require strict normality assumptions, and emphasizes predictive ability (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis was conducted in the following three stages.

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The first stage is the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model). Convergent validity is assessed by outer loading ≥ 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50. Reliability is assessed by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (ρa and ρc) ≥ 0.70. Discriminant validity is assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criteria (the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation between constructs) and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) < 0.90 (Hair et al., 2022). The second stage is the evaluation of the structural model (inner model): collinearity is checked with the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF < 5), explanatory power with R^2 (0.25 weak; 0.50 moderate; 0.75 strong), effect size with f^2 (0.02 small; 0.15 moderate; 0.35 large), predictive relevance with Q^2predict (> 0), and model fit with SRMR (< 0.08). The third stage is hypothesis testing with bootstrapping [number of subsamples, for example 5,000]; the hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05. In the mediation test, the researcher assesses the significance of the indirect and direct effects, then determines the type of mediation and the proportion of mediation (variance accounted for, VAF) which is calculated as the indirect effect divided by the total effect.

RESEARCH RESULT

Respondent Characteristics

There were 213 respondents (Table 1). The gender composition was relatively balanced. Most respondents were aged 19–30 (92.5%), and the largest income group was Rp1,000,001–Rp3,000,000 (38.5%). This composition reflects the younger generation who frequently use social media, so the research results primarily represent this group.Add TikTok usage frequency distribution if data is available]

Table 1. Respondent characteristics (N = 213)

Characteristics	Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	111	52.1
	Woman	102	47.9
Age	< 18 years	5	2.3
	19–24 years	108	50.7
	25–30 years	89	41.8
	> 30 years	11	5.2
Income per month	< Rp. 1,000,000	33	15.5
	Rp1,000,001–Rp3,000,000	82	38.5

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Characteristics	Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
	Rp3,000,001–Rp5,000,000	42	19.7
	> Rp. 5,000,001	56	26.3
Experience viewing TikTok affiliate content	Have you ever seen	213	100.0

Source: primary research data.

Evaluation of Measurement Model

1. **Convergent Validity**

All indicators had outer loadings between 0.729 and 0.874, above the 0.70 threshold (Table 2). For the affiliate marketing construct, the indicators with the highest loadings were X2 (0.863), X5 (0.861), and X3 (0.860), which relate to the role of content in introducing MSME products, increasing awareness, and facilitating information retrieval. Indicator X4 (product attention) had the lowest loading (0.729), but still met the criteria. For customer engagement, the strongest indicators were M1 (0.872) and M5 (0.862), which relate to watching content to completion and feeling involved. For purchase intention, the strongest indicator was Y2 (0.874), which relates to interest in trying a product after viewing content.

Table 2. Indicator statements and outer loading

Code	Statement	Outer loading
X1	I often see affiliate content for MSME products on TikTok	0.803
X2	TikTok affiliate content helped me get to know MSME products	0.863
X3	TikTok affiliate content makes it easier for me to find product information	0.860
X4	TikTok affiliate content caught my attention towards a product	0.729
X5	TikTok affiliate content made me more aware of the existence of MSME products	0.861
X6	TikTok affiliate content influences my interest in a product	0.853

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Code	Statement	Outer loading
M1	I am interested in watching TikTok affiliate content until the end	0.872
M2	I'm intrigued by the product affiliate content that appears on TikTok.	0.788
M3	I was prompted to seek further information after seeing TikTok affiliate content.	0.792
M4	I frequently interact with TikTok affiliate content (like, comment, or share)	0.825
M5	I feel involved with product affiliate content on TikTok	0.862
M6	I follow or re-watch affiliate content for products that interest me.	0.776
Y1	I have a desire to purchase a product promoted through TikTok affiliate	0.796
Y2	I was interested in trying the product after seeing TikTok affiliate content.	0.874
Y3	I am considering purchasing a product that appears in TikTok affiliate content.	0.781
Y4	I have the possibility to purchase a product promoted on TikTok	0.826
Y5	TikTok affiliate content increases my interest in purchasing MSME products	0.859
Y6	I intend to purchase products recommended through TikTok affiliates in the future.	0.830

Description: X = TikTok short-video affiliate marketing; M = customer engagement; Y = purchase intention. Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

The AVE values for all three constructs were above 0.50 (Table 3), namely 0.688 for affiliate marketing, 0.672 for customer engagement, and 0.686 for purchase intention. Each construct thus explained more than half of the variance in its indicator, thus meeting convergent validity.

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2. Construct Reliability

Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.902 to 0.908, composite reliability ρa 0.903 to 0.911, and ρc 0.925 to 0.930 (Table 3). All values exceeded 0.70, indicating that the indicators for each construct were internally consistent. Values above 0.90 indicate very high consistency; this may reflect the similarity of content between indicators, as discussed in the limitations section.

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity

Code	Statement	Outer loading
X1	I often see affiliate content for MSME products on TikTok	0.803
X2	TikTok affiliate content helped me get to know MSME products	0.863
X3	TikTok affiliate content makes it easier for me to find product information	0.860
X4	TikTok affiliate content caught my attention towards a product	0.729
X5	TikTok affiliate content made me more aware of the existence of MSME products	0.861
X6	TikTok affiliate content influences my interest in a product	0.853
M1	I am interested in watching TikTok affiliate content until the end	0.872
M2	I'm intrigued by the product affiliate content that appears on TikTok.	0.788
M3	I was prompted to seek further information after seeing TikTok affiliate content.	0.792
M4	I frequently interact with TikTok affiliate content (like, comment, or share)	0.825
M5	I feel involved with product affiliate content on TikTok	0.862
M6	I follow or re-watch affiliate content for products that interest me.	0.776
Y1	I have a desire to purchase a product promoted through TikTok affiliate	0.796

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Code	Statement	Outer loading
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Y4	I have the possibility to purchase a product promoted on TikTok	0.826
Y5	TikTok affiliate content increases my interest in purchasing MSME products	0.859
Y6	I intend to purchase products recommended through TikTok affiliates in the future.	0.830

Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

3. Discriminant Validity and Collinearity

Using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the AVE squared for each construct (0.820, 0.828, and 0.829) is greater than its correlation with other constructs, the highest being 0.765 (Table 4). HTMT values range from 0.723 to 0.843, below the threshold of 0.90 (Table 5) and also below the more conservative threshold of 0.85. Thus, the three constructs can be empirically distinguished. VIF values of 1.000 to 1.760 (Table 6) are well below 5, indicating no multicollinearity among predictors.

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker criteria

Construct	X	M	Y
TikTok Affiliate Marketing (X)	0.829	0.657	0.765
Customer Engagement (M)	0.657	0.820	0.765
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.765	0.765	0.828

Note: diagonal values (bold in the output) are the AVE roots; off-diagonal values are the correlations between constructs. Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

Table 5. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	X	M	Y
TikTok Affiliate Marketing (X)	0.829	0.657	0.765

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Construct	X	M	Y
Customer Engagement (M)	0.657	0.820	0.765
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.765	0.765	0.828

Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

Structural Model Evaluation

The R^2 value for customer engagement was 0.432 and for purchase intention was 0.706 (Table 7). According to Hair et al.'s (2022) criteria, the R^2 for customer engagement falls between the weak and moderate categories, while the R^2 for purchase intention falls between the moderate and strong categories. This means that affiliate marketing explains most, but not all, of the variance in consumer engagement (56.8% is explained by factors outside the model), while the combination of affiliate marketing and customer engagement explains most of the variance in purchase intention.

The effect sizes (f^2) for all three paths were large, exceeding 0.35 (Table 6). The X → M path had the largest f^2 (0.760), while the X → Y (0.413) and M → Y (0.410) paths were nearly equal. The Q^2predict values for both endogenous constructs were positive (0.427 and 0.583), indicating that the model had predictive relevance (Table 7). The SRMR of 0.060 was below 0.08, indicating good model fit. The NFI of 0.871 approached the 0.90 threshold and was considered adequate, considering that Hair et al. (2022) emphasized that the fit index in PLS-SEM is not applied as strictly as in covariance-based SEM (Table 8).

Table 6. Collinearity (VIF) and effect size (f^2)

Construct	X	M	Y
TikTok Affiliate Marketing (X)	0.829	0.657	0.765
Customer Engagement (M)	0.657	0.820	0.765
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.765	0.765	0.828

Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

Table 7. Coefficient of determination and predictive relevance

Construct	X	M	Y
TikTok Affiliate Marketing (X)	0.829	0.657	0.765
Customer Engagement (M)	0.657	0.820	0.765
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.765	0.765	0.828

Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

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Table 8. Model fit index

Index	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.060	0.060
d_ULS	0.618	0.618
d_G	0.293	0.293
Chi-square	378,318	378,318
NFI	0.871	0.871

Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping results show that all paths are significant at the 5% level (Table 9; Figure 2). Affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement (β = 0.657; t = 11.697; p < 0.001), so H1 is accepted. Customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (β = 0.461; t = 9.022; p < 0.001), so H2 is accepted. Affiliate marketing has a positive and significant direct effect on purchase intention (β = 0.462; t = 9.275; p < 0.001), so H3 is accepted. The indirect effect of X → M → Y is 0.303 (t = 6.834; p < 0.001), so H4 is accepted.

Because the direct and indirect effects are both significant and unidirectional, the mediation is complementary partial mediation (Hair et al., 2022). The total effect of affiliate marketing on purchase intention is 0.765 (0.462 + 0.303). Thus, the VAF is 39.6% (0.303 / 0.765): approximately four-tenths of the total stimulus effect on purchase intention occurs through customer engagement, with the remainder occurring directly.Total effect values and VAF are calculated from the reported coefficients; see Table 10; match with SmartPLS output (Total Effects)]

Table 9. Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Track	β	Mean	STDEV	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	X → M	0.657	0.656	0.056	11,697	0,000	Accepted
H2	M → Y	0.461	0.459	0.051	9,022	0,000	Accepted
H3	X → Y	0.462	0.461	0.050	9,275	0,000	Accepted
H4	X → M → Y	0.303	0.302	0.044	6,834	0,000	Accepted (partial)

Source: SmartPLS data processing results (bootstrapping).

Table 10. Direct, indirect, and total effects

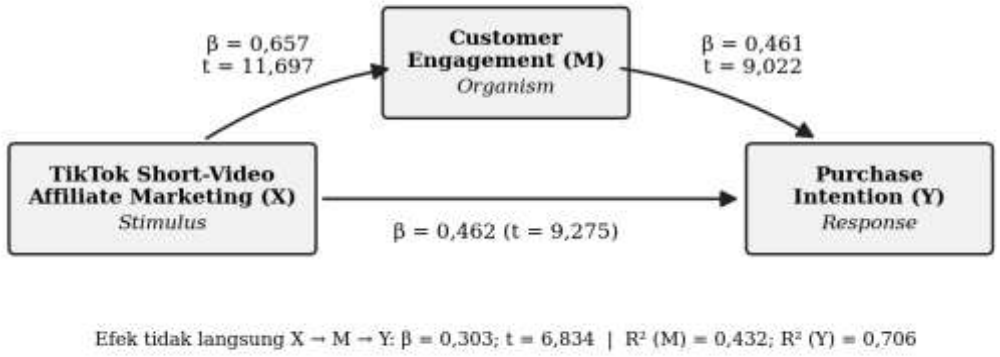
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Track	Immediate effects	Indirect effects	Total effect	VAF
X → M	0.657	–	0.657	–
M → Y	0.461	–	0.461	–
X → Y	0.462	0.303	0.765	39.6%

Description: indirect effect = 0.657 × 0.461 ≈ 0.303; total effect = 0.462 + 0.303; VAF = 0.303 / 0.765. Calculated from the coefficients in Table 9.

Figure 2. Results of structural model estimation



Source: SmartPLS data processing results.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Affiliate Marketing on Customer Engagement (H1)

The results of H1 indicate that affiliate content on TikTok is a strong driver of consumer engagement (β = 0.657; f² = 0.760). This finding aligns with Lee and Park (2022) and Herzallah et al. (2025), who demonstrated that content quality influences customer engagement, and with Li et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of social interaction in shaping engagement in social commerce. The indicator loading pattern provides additional clues: the strongest indicators for construct X are the content's ability to introduce products, provide information, and raise awareness (X2, X3, X5). This pattern is consistent with the findings of Herzallah et al. (2025) that content informativeness is the strongest driver of engagement. This means that, in respondents' perceptions, the primary value of affiliate content lies in its informational function, and it is this function that then triggers attention and interaction. Within the S–O–R framework, these results support the position of affiliate content as a stimulus that shapes consumers' internal states.

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The Influence of Customer Engagement on Purchase Intention (H2)

Customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (β = 0.461). This value is close to the coefficient reported by Herzallah et al. (2025) for the effect of customer engagement on repurchase intention (β = 0.443), although the country context and response variables are different, so this similarity should not be interpreted as a direct replication. This result is also consistent with Zheng et al. (2025), who placed cognitive engagement in the pathway to purchase intention. The strongest indicators of customer engagement, namely watching content to completion (M1) and feeling involved (M5), indicate that engagement that is valuable for purchase intention is engagement that is attentive and connected, not merely superficial interactions such as likes.

Direct Influence of Affiliate Marketing on Purchase Intention (H3)

The direct effect of affiliate marketing on purchase intention was significant (β = 0.462) and nearly as strong as the effect of customer engagement. This finding supports Shen and Wang (2024) who found that short video marketing increases purchase intention, and aligns with Jiang and Chen's (2025) model that an antecedent can influence purchase intention directly and through a mediator. Affiliate content that is informative and showcases products can quickly form positive evaluations, resulting in purchase intention without in-depth engagement. It should be noted that all respondents were selected because they had previously interacted with affiliate content (purposive sampling criteria). This may make respondents more responsive to such content than the general TikTok user population, so the effect size should be interpreted with caution.

The Mediating Role of Customer Engagement (H4)

The indirect effect of 0.303 with a VAF of 39.6% indicates complementary partial mediation. Customer engagement is a significant, but not the sole, pathway connecting affiliate content to purchase intention. This finding aligns with literature identifying other mediators in the short video context, such as persona perception and shared values (Shen & Wang, 2024), perceived value and digital dependency (Jiang & Chen, 2025), and trust and perceived value in live streaming (Imanuddin & Handayani, 2025). Thus, the S–O–R framework is empirically supported, but the organism in affiliate marketing likely consists of multiple internal states working together. Future research could examine customer engagement alongside trust in the affiliate and perceived value.

Implications

Theoretical implications. This study extends the application of S–O–R to short video affiliate formats for MSME products. It also demonstrates that customer

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engagement functions as a partial mediator, not solely as a marketing outcome, adding evidence to the view that purchase intentions are formed through internal consumer processes.

Practical implications For MSMEs and affiliates, these results direct efforts toward content that keeps viewers engaged and engaged, as these two aspects are the strongest indicators of engagement. Content that clearly introduces the product and makes it easy to find information (indicators X2, X3, X5) forms an effective foundation. Because the direct impact of content is also significant, the quality of product information must still be maintained even when targeting engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that TikTok short-video affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement and purchase intention of MSME products, that customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, and that customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between the two variables. The model has good measurement quality, high explanatory power (R^2 purchase intention = 0.706), and adequate predictive relevance.

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, so the relationships found are best read as associations consistent with theory. Second, the data come from a single self-report questionnaire, so common method bias may exist and has not been specifically tested. Third, purposive sampling and the predominance of respondents aged 19–30 years limit generalizability. Fourth, this study measures purchase intentions, not actual purchases. Fifth, the very high reliability values (>0.90) and HTMT of 0.839–0.843 between X–Y and M–Y indicate possible content overlap between indicators, for example, indicator X6, which is closely related to purchase intentions. Future research could refine the operationalization of the stimulus, measure other mediators (trust in affiliates, perceived value, perceived commercial motives), use actual purchase data or a longitudinal design, compare age and income groups, and include other platforms.

For MSMEs and affiliates, the practical advice is to design content that is both informative and encourages engagement, and to evaluate campaigns using engagement indicators in addition to the number of impressions and sales.

Ethics and funding statements

[Contents: ethical approval/informed consent, funding sources (if any), conflict of interest statement, and data availability statement according to the provisions of the target journal.]

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