



Driving towards Customer Purchase in Social Commerce: Harnessing the Significance of Content Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, and Customer Reviews

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Abstract: This study aims to understand the influence of content marketing, affiliate marketing, and customer reviews on customer purchase decisions through social commerce platforms. These platforms include social media channels that function as e-commerce, such as TikTok Shop, Instagram Shop, Facebook Marketplace, Line Shop, YouTube Shop, and WhatsApp. The research employs a quantitative methodology, a structured questionnaire was distributed using google form toward 200 respondents across five major cities in Indonesia: Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Medan, and Semarang. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, targeting respondents aged 17 to 50 who actively shop through social commerce platforms. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS software. The findings indicate that the most frequently used social commerce platforms in Indonesia are TikTok Shop (57.5%), Instagram Shop (18.5%), WhatsApp (10.5%), Facebook Marketplace (9.5%), and Line Shop (4%). The results of hypothesis testing reveal that while content marketing has no significant impact on purchase decisions through social commerce, affiliate marketing and customer reviews positively and significantly influence customer purchase decisions on social commerce. These findings provide valuable insights for businesses leveraging social commerce, emphasizing the need to optimize the role of affiliate marketing and customer reviews to enhance online sales.

Keywords: affiliate marketing, content marketing, customer review, purchase decision, social commerce.

Introduction

The use of internet technology has skyrocketed and has had a significant impact on Indonesian social and economic lives. The development and breakthroughs of the business world in utilizing the internet and communication technology have made it easier for people to communicate with the outside world (Setianingsih & Aziz, 2022). Based on data published by Goodstats in 2024, internet users in Indonesia have reached 185.3 million. This number increased by 0.8% compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Communication and Digital in 2024 stated that the widespread use of smartphones with affordable data package prices allows internet users in Indonesia to access various online services such as online shopping, financial services, and digital content. Other research also mentioned that 79.5% of Indonesians had internet access in 2024 (Piliana & Maradona, 2024). The continued growth in internet usage reflects positive opportunities for business players who want to take advantage of e-

commerce in Indonesia (Prasetyo & Purbawati, 2016), especially amid the growth of digital transactions from e-commerce and social commerce.

Media is a means of online social interaction connected to the internet and allows users to share information more easily and connect with each other. The high growth of internet users in Indonesia is caused by its benefits (Sianipar & Djamaluddin, 2023). In the digital era, businesses actively strive to secure a competitive edge by utilizing digital media to achieve long-term financial growth in many sectors. Running a solid business using the internet is crucial (Sakas et al., 2023). Social media plays a significant role in finding sources of information or communicating with peers, and as a place to buy products (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). The rapid growth of e-commerce and social media has opened up opportunities for new types of online trading and marketing businesses through social media, which is called social commerce. It is also strongly influenced by

digital marketing as a crucial element to drive economic competitiveness through the digital economy (Subkhan et al., 2024).

E-commerce is a process of implementing trade that utilizes telecommunications media and digital telecommunications-based tools (Pambudi et al., 2024). E-commerce and social commerce have different characteristics. E-commerce only uses tools like forums, chat rooms, and recommendation systems to facilitate transactions. At the same time, through social commerce, users benefit from their interactions with other users using social media. Some social media in Indonesia that function as social commerce are TikTok Shop, YouTube Shop, Line Shop, Facebook Marketplace, and WhatsApp. TikTok is one of the most popular social commerce platforms in Indonesia.

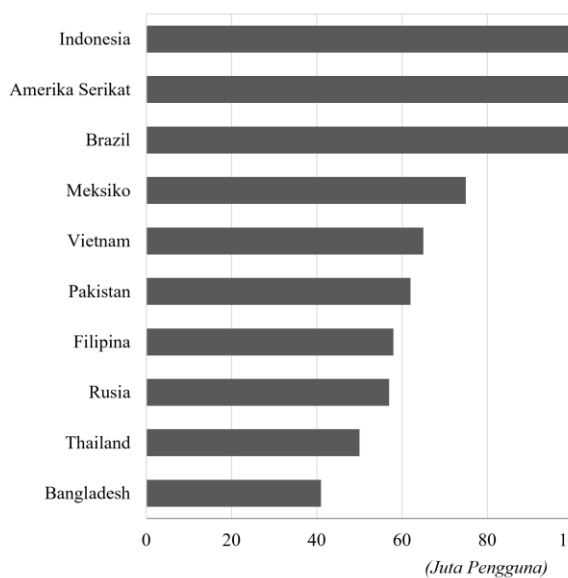


Figure 1 Countries With the Largest Active TikTok Users in the World (Million Users)
Source: GoodStats (2024)

The number of TikTok active users in Indonesia in 2024 is expected to reach almost 160 million. Indonesia became the first country with the largest TikTok users in the world, while China uses Douyin as a social commerce platform with 700 million users. The right social commerce strategy will help businesses be more competitive in the market. Therefore, the factors that significantly

influence purchase decisions in social commerce pose a challenge for researchers to study in more detail. Understanding potential customer decision-making to decide for conversion (Nata & Sudarwanto, 2022).

One of the most popular strategies that many companies use on social media is content marketing. The goal is to educate customers about their products or services by encouraging conversions in customer purchase decisions. In order for purchasing actions to occur, quality and informative content that aligns with customer needs is essential (Pektas & Hassan, 2020). The different needs of businesses may alter the goal of content marketing. Some research shows that content marketing significantly affects customer purchasing decisions (Nata & Sudarwanto, 2022; Shadrina & Yoestini, 2022). On the other hand, research by Asnawati et al. (2021) shows different results, in which content marketing does not have a significant effect on purchasing decisions, especially in the case of the transaction of the Traveloka application. However, content marketing positively influences encouraging purchases from passive customers (Chu et al., 2021). The inconsistent findings across prior studies regarding content marketing suggest that variations in marketing, such as differences in product characteristics, transactional channel, and market structure may generate divergent effects on consumer decision-making behavior. This study examines the role of content marketing within the specific context of consumer purchasing behavior in social commerce, a domain that remains relatively underexplored in the existing literature. A product or brand must convince customers by fulfilling their expectations in terms of quality, price, and value to make them always remember the brand (Azmy et al., 2020).

Another strategy in social commerce is collaborating with content creators or freelance marketing partners through affiliate marketing programs. Affiliate marketing programs can function as influencers as a company's effort to collaborate with someone with a large online followers and influence a specific demographic target (Veverka, 2024). In this program,

companies can take advantage of two-way communication to market their products, and the audience can pretend to be customers and get information about the product (Gunawan et al., 2021). For example, in the TikTok affiliate program, TikTok shares a commission with the marketing affiliates from every viewer who buys a product through an affiliate link. TikTok is persistently increasing its popularity, despite criticism because of its popular dance videos perceived as less educational (Hardianawati, 2023). TikTok is the most popular platform in social commerce, which is contributing 85% of total transactions in 2024, whereas in 2023, TikTok was only used by 70.8% of users (Subkhan & Barrygian, 2024). Some research states that affiliate marketing positively and significantly influences customer purchase decisions (Arsyillah, 2022; Asadiyah et al., 2023; Husnayetti et al., 2023).

Furthermore, customer transactions via social commerce need reliable information based on the customer experience delivered through customer reviews. Consumers seek purchasing guidance from both online and offline perspectives (Kotler, 2019). Customer reviews are evaluations from past customers' purchase experience in various aspects of assessment. According to the result of the review, customers are allowed to learn about the quality of a product on the review page from experienced buyers. However, a common challenge of customer reviews is that customers do not necessarily get the right and fair information. For example, product reviews on TikTok Shop media are often unreliable since each customer has a different review subject to the different interests of each reviewer, and even worse if they also function as affiliates. This is what causes customer reviews on social media to be unreliable. Customer reviews positively and significantly affect customer purchasing decisions (Chen et al., 2022; Godara et al., 2024; Sianipar & Yoestini, 2021). On the contrary, research by Shaddai & Pustap (2020) found that customer reviews have a positive effect but no significant influence on purchasing decisions.

Thus, there is no comprehensive research related to the factors that significantly

influence customer decisions to make purchases through social commerce, such as TikTok Shop, Facebook Marketplace, Line Shop, WhatsApp, Shopee Live, and YouTube Shop. This research aims to measure the influence of content marketing, affiliate marketing, and customer reviews on customer purchasing decisions through social commerce.

Literature review

Content Marketing

Content marketing supports marketing by providing in-depth and appealing information to potential customers (Li et al., 2022). Meanwhile, according to (Pidada & Suyasa, 2021), content marketing is disseminating and creating engaging content to the right target group to convert them into customers. According to Chen (2023), the three main categories of content are marketing content (awards, brand resonance, and promotions); experiential content (personal, brand community, and users); and rational content (information, function, education, and most recent events). Content marketing is used to educate and provide the knowledge customers need to stay involved in customer journey activities (Hasani et al., 2023). Through interaction with particular content, social media users can freely engage with influencers and the content they produce and feel more connected with them (Atiq et al., 2022). Content marketing can encourage passive customers positively (Chu et al., 2021). A brand can carry out digital marketing activities through a content marketing strategy by making proper curation, and customers can share it on their social media (Plessis, 2022).

Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is a marketing program carried out by building affiliates or performance-based partnerships, especially for online marketing strategies, where brands only pay when sales are linked back to the affiliates who generated them. Affiliate marketing is one of the most popular channels among online businesses and marketers today (Mangiò & Di Domenico, 2022). The affiliate marketing business model compensates affiliates for

attracting new customers and promoting purchases (Hing et al., 2024). Meanwhile, according to (2024), affiliate marketing is an online marketing tactic whereby a person or business signs a contract to advertise goods or services from outside sources as a partner. Affiliate marketing aims to market and sell goods and services through alternative distribution channels, such as sending customers purchase information to complete a transaction (Patrick & Hee, 2021). Affiliate marketing has become a key factor in online business, digital commerce, and rapidly changing customers (Jyotsna et al., 2024). Numerous studies reveal that affiliate marketing significantly influences customer purchase decisions (Arsyillah, 2022; Asadiyah et al., 2023; Hardianawati, 2023; Husnayetti et al., 2023).

Customer Reviews

According to Hasrul et al (2021), understanding customer reviews is a condition that experienced buyers feel about the service or quality products sellers provide on online platforms. Customer reviews shape customer insight according to the evaluation of past purchased products. According to the reviews, prospective buyers can first assess the quality of a product through page reviews and testimonials from past buyers. Customer reviews serve as strong evidence of real experiences and provide invaluable information that goes beyond the carefully crafted marketing messages of the companies (Godara et al., 2024). To date, customer reviews have become the most trusted source of information for potential customers based on past customers' purchasing and usage experiences. Other studies also show that customer reviews positively influence customer purchase decisions (Godara et al., 2024; Ramadan et al., 2021; Sianipar & Yoestini, 2021). Conversely, research by Shaddai & Pustap (2020) revealed that customer reviews have a positive influence but no significance on customer purchase decisions.

Buying Decision

Tjiptono (2014) explains that customer purchase decisions are steps to identify

problems, such as looking for information about relevant products, assessing the extent to which each choice can solve problems, and finally deciding to purchase. Customers make the purchase decision when choosing products that fulfil their needs and wants. According to Kotler et al. (2022), there are four stages of customer purchase decision: recognizing needs, searching for information, finding alternative choices, and finally making purchase decisions. The proliferation of online platforms and social media has empowered customers with unprecedented agency to articulate their opinions and experiences, thereby exerting considerable influence on purchasing decisions through online media (Godara et al., 2024).

Social Commerce

Social commerce is a series of business features from social media platforms that combine e-commerce features with customer experience. Prospective buyers on social commerce platforms have social interactions with each other (Xiang et al., 2016). Social commerce is a trend that connects sellers with online social media. Social commerce is no different from e-commerce, except that activities and transactions in this platform are carried out through social media. Several social commerce platforms that are very popular in Indonesia are TikTok Shop, Instagram Shop, YouTube Shop, Facebook Marketplace, Line Shop, and WhatsApp Business. The most popular social commerce feature is the livestreaming service, where streamers or broadcasters share video and audio content live, such as video games, talent shows, daily activities, or tailored content to their audiences (Hu et al., 2017).

Research conducted by Shadrina & Yoestini (2022) in Magelang stated that content marketing positively and significantly influences customer purchase decisions on Instagram and TikTok. Numerous studies revealed that affiliate marketing significantly impacts customer purchasing decisions (Andriyanti & Farida, 2022; Arsyillah, 2022; Asadiyah et al., 2023; Husnayetti et al., 2023). Moreover, research by Sianipar & Yoestini (2021) mentioned that customer reviews

significantly influence customer purchase decisions. Thus, this study assesses three research hypotheses related to the influence of customer purchase decisions on social commerce platforms as follows:

H1: Content marketing significantly influences customer purchase decisions in social commerce.

H2: Affiliate marketing significantly influences customer purchase decisions in social commerce.

H3: Customer reviews significantly influence customer purchase decisions in social commerce.

H4: Content marketing, affiliate marketing, and customer reviews significantly influence customer purchase decisions in social commerce.

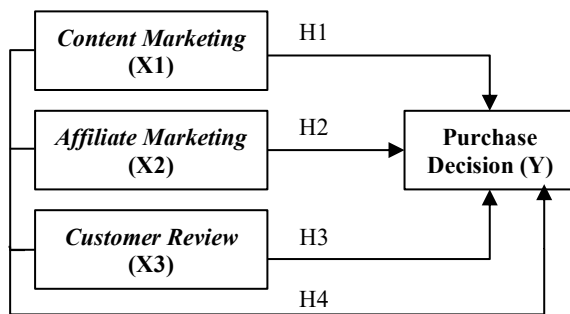


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Source: researcher analysis (2025)

Research Methods

This study is conducted through a quantitative approach. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research is a research method that involves several independent variables without making analogies with other variables. The population of this study is all social commerce users in five major cities in Indonesia, namely Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Medan, and Semarang. The city selection is based on Indonesia’s five most significant economic productivity, measured by gross domestic regional product (GDRP). The sample selection was carried out using the non-probability method, which is carried out using purposive sampling techniques. The study’s sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula, assuming a 95% confidence level and a margin of error rate of 6.93% with an unknown population size. A margin of error

ranging from 5–10% is widely regarded as academically acceptable and methodologically sound, as it is supported by established statistical principles concerning sampling distributions, estimation accuracy, and the reliability of inferential analysis, while also providing an appropriate basis for evaluating model adequacy (Bougie & Sekaran, 2025). The number of samples taken in this study was 200 respondents. The distribution of samples across each city was 40 respondents, determined using a quota technique. The research instruments are a structured questionnaire distributed using the Google Forms tool. A Likert scale of 1-5 is used for each research indicator, where 1 has a strong negative meaning and 5 has a strong positive meaning. The specific sample criteria are buyers on social commerce platforms in the last three months and aged between 17 and 50 years old. The research hypothesis testing and analysis were conducted using the t-test and multiple regression with SPSS 27 tools.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Total	Percentage
Gender		
Man	125	62.50%
Woman	75	37.50%
Domicile		
Jakarta	40	20%
Surabaya	40	20%
Bandung	40	20%
Medan	40	20%
Semarang	40	20%
Age		
17-20	31	15.50%
21-25	38	19%
26-30	42	21%
31-35	26	13%
36-40	22	11%
41-45	29	14.5%
46-50	12	6%
Work		
Self-employed	52	26%
Employee Private	44	22%
Housewife	39	19.5%
Gov’t employees	38	19%
Students	27	13.5%

Source: primary data, processed (2025)

According to Table 1, this study involved 62.5% male respondents and 37.5% female respondents. The respondents were distributed evenly by 20% across Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Medan, and Semarang. By age criteria, 55.5% of respondents were aged 17 to 30, and the remaining 44.5% were aged 31 to 50. Based on occupation, most respondents were self-employed (26%), private employees (22%), homemakers (19.5%), and civil servants (19%).

Based on Figure 3, TikTok Shop is the most frequently used social commerce platform by respondents (58%). The other four platforms most frequently used by respondents are Instagram Shop (19%), WhatsApp (11%), Facebook Marketplace (4%), and Line Shop (4%). Thus, TikTok Shop and Instagram Shop are the two social commerce platforms most preferred by customers in Indonesia.

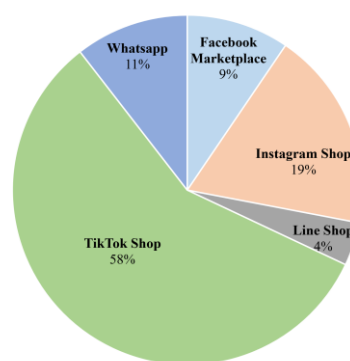


Figure 3. Most Frequently Used Social Commerce Platforms

Source: primary data, processed (2025)

Instrument Test

As illustrated in Table 2, a validity test was conducted using R, with a table of 0.138. According to the validity test results, all research instruments are valid, as indicated by the r value of 25 existing indicators exceeding

Table 2. Instrument Test

Variable	Item	R Value	R-Table	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Content Marketing (X1)	User cognition 1	0,661	0,138	Valid	0,816	Reliable
	User cognition 2	0,643	0,138			
	Sharing motivation 1	0,769	0,138			
	Sharing motivation 2	0,754	0,138			
	Persuasion 1	0,638	0,138			
	Persuasion 2	0,559	0,138			
	Decision making	0,695	0,138			
	Uniqueness	0,585	0,138			
Affiliate Marketing (X2)	Affiliate influence	0,624	0,138	Valid	0,77	Reliable
	Message credibility	0,712	0,138			
	Message creativity	0,668	0,138			
	Message clarity	0,609	0,138			
	Message uniqueness	0,743	0,138			
	Affiliate environment	0,736	0,138			
Customer Review (X3)	Benefit	0,639	0,138	Valid	0,818	Reliable
	Suitability	0,753	0,138			
	Credibility 1	0,746	0,138			
	Credibility 2	0,742	0,138			
	Quality	0,752	0,138			
Purchase Decision (Y)	Engagement	0,709	0,138	Valid	0,773	Reliable
	Purchase objective	0,731	0,138			
	Information process	0,789	0,138			
	Information quality	0,778	0,138			
	Recommendation	0,678	0,138			
	Repurchase	0,645	0,138			

Source: primary data, processed (2025)

the existing r-table, with a significance level of 5% for 200 respondents. The reliability test on all research variables shows that all four research variables have a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.60. These indicate that the variables of content marketing, affiliate marketing, customer review, and purchase decision are reliable and strongly represent the variables of the study.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test

Model	Collinearity Statistic	
	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
X1. Content Marketing	.604	1.656
X2. Affiliate Marketing	.462	2.166
X3. Customer Review	.575	1.741

Source: primary data, processed (2025)

According to Table 3, the multicollinearity test result shows that the multicollinearity problem in the research does not exist. This is indicated by the tolerance value > 0.10 and the VIF value < 10, which means no multicollinearity problems among the independent variables. Figure 4 in this study also shows there is no heteroscedasticity. The test measures the existence of inequality problems in the regression model. The results of the test show that the dots are randomly distributed and no consistent pattern above or below the number 0 on the Y axis. It can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity in the data of this study. Furthermore, the normality test is carried out to assess whether

the independent variables (X) and dependent variables (Y) are normally distributed. Based on the probability plot, the normality test shows the residual distribution is normal and has a symmetrical shape that does not lean to the right or left. The dots in the probability plot graph are densely distributed around the diagonal line, meaning that each variable is normally distributed.

Hypothesis Test

Multiple linear regression in Table 4 shows that the independent variables of content marketing (X1), affiliate marketing (X2), and customer review (X3) have a positive influence on purchase decisions in social commerce (Y). The mathematical equation of the research model is written as follows:

$$Y = 4.409 + 0.061 X_1 + 0.259 X_2 + 0.326 X_3 + e$$

Whereby;

Y = Purchase decision through social commerce

X1 = Content marketing variable

X2 = Affiliate marketing variable

X3 = Customer review variable

e = Accepted error value.

According to Tables 4, the results of the H1 hypothesis test show that the content marketing variable has a significant value of 0.203 > 0.05 and a calculated t of 1.278 < t table (1.971). This result indicates that content marketing has no significant influence on purchase decisions in social commerce, so H1 is rejected. In the H2 hypothesis, the affiliate marketing variable has a significant value of

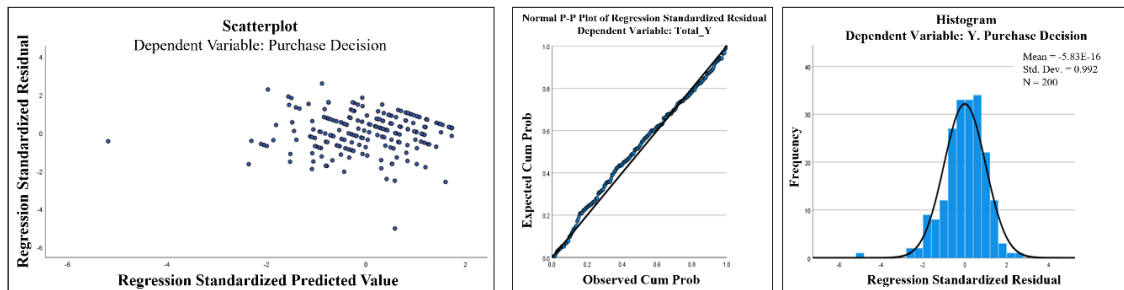


Figure 4. Heteroskedasticity test (left) and normality test (middle and right)

Source: primary data, processed (2025)

0.001 < 0.05 and a t value of 3.472 > t table (1.971).

enough sense of urgency or trust to influence customers to make a purchase decision

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	b	Std. Error	Beta	Value	Value
(Constant)	4.409	1,402		3.144	.002
X1. Content Marketing	.061	.048	.088	1.278	.203
X2. Affiliate Marketing	.259	.075	.275	3.472	.001
X3. Customer Review	.326	.059	.388	5,480	.000
F-Test	50,177		Sig. F	.000	

Source: Primary data, processed (2025)

Affiliate marketing variables have a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions in social commerce, so H2 is accepted. In the H3 hypothesis, the customer review variable has a significant value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a t value of 5.480 > t table (1.971). Customer review has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions in social commerce, so H3 is accepted. In the H4 hypothesis, the F test results show that the calculated F value is 50.177, greater than the F table value (2.65) with a significant value of 0.000 < 0.05. It shows that the three independent variables of this study (content marketing, affiliate marketing, and customer review) simultaneously have a positive and significant influence on customer purchase decisions through social commerce (Y), so the H4 hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

This study's results show that content marketing does not significantly influence customer purchase decisions in social commerce, such as TikTok Shop, Instagram Shop, Facebook Marketplace, YouTube Shop, etc. This differs from the previous study, which mentioned that content marketing positively and significantly influences purchase decisions on Instagram and TikTok in Magelang. On the other hand, research by Asnawati et al. (2021) also shows that content marketing does not significantly influence customer purchase decisions. Both of these studies convey the message that content marketing positively impacts customer purchase decisions in social commerce. Marketing content is often informative, but it cannot always create a strong

immediately. However, some content marketing through engaging and educational short videos may attract potential customers in social commerce. Moreover, TikTok Shop customers enjoy sellers' live streaming content or tutorial videos on various product usage.

The findings of this research also show that customer purchase decisions on social commerce are strongly influenced by affiliate marketing. Affiliate marketing becomes a vital option for an effective digital marketing strategy. Affiliate marketing requires using a specific affiliate link code on social media networks that allow affiliates to advertise particular goods and services to their audiences. The affiliates will receive a marketing commission when customers purchase through the link (Piliana & Maradona, 2024). This research finding is in line with the previous study, which stated that affiliate marketing has a significant impact on purchasing decisions (Andriyanti & Farida, 2022; Arsyillah, 2022; Asadiyah et al., 2023; Husnayetti et al., 2023). Affiliate marketing in social commerce is implemented by a marketing commission system given to creators or influencers who promote products through affiliate links. For example, on TikTok Shop, creators may include product links in their videos, and every time a customer or follower purchases a product through the link, the creator will receive a marketing commission. This study also shows that the success of an affiliate program depends on at least four factors: social commerce platform, the ability of the individual as an affiliate, the messages conveyed, and a supportive social commerce environment.

Customer reviews strongly influence customers' purchase decisions in social commerce. In the context of product purchase through social commerce platforms, increasing positive reviews about a product, for example, the product's suitability, clear information, quality products, and customer experience, will cause customers to trust and make a purchase decision. A similar finding is also found in the research by Sianipar & Yoestini (2021), which states that customer reviews significantly influence purchase decisions. On the TikTok Shop platform, customer reviews are often shared as short videos from buyers showing their experience with the product. Many buyers upload before-and-after videos, unboxing videos, or natural reactions to product usage experiences they buy, then provide reviews in the comment column. Video customer reviews are more attractive and convincing to prospective customers because they provide visual evidence that directly influences customers' purchase decisions. From the perspective of social proof theory, customer reviews exert the strongest influence on purchase decisions because they represent peer-generated, experience-based evaluations that reduce uncertainty and perceived risk more effectively (Cialdini, 2008). Moreover, in accordance with credibility theory, affiliate marketing demonstrates a moderately strong impact on purchase decision, as it functions as quasi-independent endorsers whose perceived expertise and trustworthiness enhance persuasive effectiveness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). In contrast, in accordance with content marketing theory, branded content tends to exert a comparatively lower direct influence on purchase decisions because it primarily operates at the awareness and interest stages, fostering cognitive and affective engagement rather than immediate behavioral conversion (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Pulizzi, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is carried out in five major cities in Indonesia (Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Medan, and Semarang) to determine the factors that influence customer purchase decisions on social commerce media such as

TikTok Shop, IG Shop, FB Marketplace, YouTube Shop, etc. The study's findings conclude four important results related to customer purchase decisions in social commerce. First, content marketing does not significantly influence customer purchase decisions in social commerce. Second, affiliate marketing has a strong positive influence on customer purchase decisions in social commerce. Third, customer reviews have a strong positive influence on customer purchase decisions in social commerce. An increasing number of customer reviews related to products or services, for example, product suitability, clarity of information, quality products, and customer experience, positively influence customer purchase decisions on social commerce platforms. A positive review of a product or service will increase customer confidence to purchase a product or service on social commerce sites. Fourth, content marketing, affiliate marketing, and customer reviews simultaneously have a positive and significant influence on customer purchase decisions in social commerce. These three strategies may be applied together to support digital marketing programs by both individuals and companies to increase social commerce sales, prioritizing affiliate program marketing and encouraging buyers to provide positive reviews of their purchased products. It helps potential customers increase their confidence in their purchase decision. Future research is recommended to conduct a qualitative study to explore the behavior, habits, and attitudes of social commerce customers related to the variables of content marketing, affiliate marketing, and customer review as factors that influence customer purchase decisions in social commerce.

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