

FROM SCROLLING TO PURCHASE: INFLUENCERS, EWOM, AND IN-FEED ADS ON TIKTOK

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(Received 18th March 2026; revised 26th June 2026; accepted 28th July 2026)

Abstract. TikTok, a highly popular application, has emerged as a formidable marketing instrument due to its distinctive and engaging features. The platform provides advanced targeting capabilities, enabling businesses to effectively connect with their desired audience to access various information. In 2022, TikTok achieved the highest number of downloads and user engagement among social media applications in Malaysia. Thus, the purpose of this study is to empirically investigate the impact of the TikTok platform on consumers' purchasing intentions regarding instant noodle products in Malaysia. The problem statement emphasizes the necessity of understanding how TikTok influences customer purchase intentions for instant noodles products. Utilizing descriptive research design, the study surveyed 169 respondents and applied various data analysis methods, including multiple regression analysis. Results indicate that Social Media Influencers (SMIs), Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), and In-Feed Advertising significantly correlate with customer purchase intentions. These variables demonstrate that TikTok's effectiveness lies in its ability to leverage influencer credibility, peer recommendations, and personalized advertising formats to drive purchase decisions towards instant noodle products. Based on these findings, it furnishes instant noodle products marketers with a set of strategic recommendations to enhance their TikTok platform as a potent marketing tool to enhance customer purchase intentions. Recommendations include fostering interactive content engagement through influencers, utilizing in-feed live demonstrations to showcase product use, designing job-specific content campaign strategies to target niche audiences, and encouraging collaborative content creation to enhance authenticity and relatability. Additionally, these strategies position TikTok as a potent marketing tool capable of enhancing customer purchase intentions and reinforcing brand loyalty within Malaysia's competitive instant noodle market.

Keywords: *customer purchase intention, Social Media Influencer (SMIs), Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), in feed advertising*

Introduction

Social media has transformed how companies and brands communicate with their customers, necessitating the integration of social media into their business plans. Utilizing social media marketing has become essential for gaining a competitive edge. This form of marketing encompasses various digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Experts describe social media as a tool for interactive communication with consumers (Appel et.al, 2020). However, social media marketing goes beyond mere communication and includes activities like entertainment, interaction, word-of-mouth, and customization (Muhammad Sohaib, 2023). According to Tang (2019), TikTok or Douyin is a Music Creative Short Video Social Software that enables users to create and share short videos. Developed by ByteDance, this Chinese-language platform initially launched in the Chinese market in September 2016, functioning as a community hub. In 2017, TikTok was introduced for iOS and Android, allowing users to create videos by selecting songs and incorporating music into their creations using

the app. According to Omnicore data, 50% of TikTok's global users are under 34 years old, with 26% falling in the 18 to 24 age range. Moreover, 90% of TikTok users visit the application more than once a day. This indicates a strong potential for active users to become paying customers. According to Tham (2022), the research conducted on 100 respondents from Kuala Lumpur found that TikTok had a big impact on young adults' shopping habits where the findings indicated that the products featured in the short videos of social media influencers on TikTok captured the attention of most respondents. The hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt, designed for sharing the latest purchases influenced by the app, has gathered a massive 5.8 billion views up to now.

Literature review

Consumer's purchase intention

The studies conducted by Meliawati et.al (2023) provide significant knowledge on the determinants that impact purchase intention in the context of social media marketing and conspicuous spending. These studies provide valuable insights into the changing patterns of customer behaviour in the digital world and the consequences for firms aiming to improve their online marketing strategies. Jessica Widjaya conducted research in 2022 with the objective of enhancing purchase intention in the food and beverage business among TikTok users in Greater Jakarta and Tangerang by using electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The research revealed that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), brand image, and customer attractiveness had a substantial influence on purchase intention inside the TikTok platform. Businesses in the food and beverage sector may use electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and social media marketing to effectively impact customers' buying choices. Moreover, a product that has significant brand equity dimensions will result in a strong inclination to make a purchase (Chakraborty, 2019).

In a study conducted by Wen Yao in 2023, the researcher examined the impact of online social media marketing on customer purchase intention, with a specific emphasis on the platform TikTok. The survey revealed that 59.42% of individuals acknowledged experiencing a buy intention as a result of material on TikTok, whilst 21.02% expressed disagreement. Furthermore, a significant majority of participants, namely 61.59%, reported being motivated by the material they saw on TikTok. A notable proportion of 30.43% confirmed that they had made a purchase of a product or service they had come across on the site. Recent research by Hanaysha (2021) discovered that the use of social media advertising tools and active involvement with brands had a noteworthy influence on customers' purchase intention to make a purchase within the fast-food business. Moslehpour et.al (2020) research revealed that social media marketing has a substantial influence on purchase intention.

Social media influencer

Social media influencers (SMIs) are individuals on social media who have cultivated an active community by generating and sharing content centered around their expertise and knowledge, such as health, fitness, fashion, and lifestyle (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). SMIs captivate their followers through engaging and high-quality content, including posts, videos, images, and live interactions. Globally, influencer marketing reached USD 148 million in 2019-an increase of approximately 8% over the previous year-and is projected to exceed USD 373 million in the next six years. In addition, 94% of

marketers believe that using SMIs is effective (Lou and Yuan, 2019), and 89% consider that the return on investment of influencer marketing is equal to or greater than other marketing strategies (Martínez-López, 2020). Remarkably, it is 11 times that of traditional advertising (Lou and Yuan, 2019). This engagement gives them a platform to endorse brands and sway consumers' purchasing decisions. Bhojwani and Saxena (2025) provides a systematic review of 60 studies on social media influencer (SMI) marketing between 2019–2025, which highlights how influencer attributes such as credibility, authenticity, and expertise interact with consumer psychology and platform factors to shape behavioural outcomes including purchase intention, loyalty, and actual buying behaviour. The review confirms earlier findings that credibility and parasocial interaction drive consumer trust and engagement. Recent research indicates that contemporary consumers tend to place more trust in SMIs than traditional advertising methods (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). According to Ghosh (2022), SMIs build an emblematic affinity by sharing engaging content with their followers about their status, lifestyle, taste and preferences.

Previous studies have primarily focused on identifying the characteristics of SMIs and examining their influence on the behavioural intentions of their followers (Lee and Eastin, 2021; Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). However, while intentions serve as crucial precursors to behaviour, they may not consistently translate into actual behaviour due to various factors (Lee and Eastin, 2021). Consequently, Lee and Eastin (2021) have expressed concerns regarding the need for future studies to analyse how SMI attributes impact the purchasing behaviour of their followers. Therefore, the hypothesis is written as follows: H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between Social Media Influencer (SMI) and customer purchase intention.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Zhang et.al (2023) did a meta-analysis of 101 studies and found that eWOM significantly affects consumers' intentions to buy, how they buy, and the brand's value. eWOM has a bigger effect on goods that are more involved and riskier and on people with a lot of social influence. According to the findings of an investigation carried out, the study demonstrated that eWOM had a considerable beneficial influence on customers' intention to purchase. It is argued in Yang and Jiang (2021) study that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a crucial component in shaping consumer decision-making processes, and the growth of social media and online communities has magnified its impact. To provide evidence supporting this claim, Yang conducts a literature study on the current research on eWOM and its influence on customer behaviour. He draws on studies from a variety of fields, such as marketing, psychology, and communication. The author emphasises the significance of trust, trustworthiness, and social influence in determining the efficacy of eWOM, as well as the function that online reviews and ratings play in making a purchase choice.

According to research, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a beneficial effect on the purchasing decisions made by customers. According to the study's findings, eWOM can affect the buying intentions, attitudes, and actual purchase behaviour of customers. Moreover, Saif and Nofal (2026) examines how different sources of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) affect consumers' purchase intentions, with gender as a moderating factor. Based on a survey of 901 students, the study found that strong ties and influencer eWOM significantly enhance perceived value and purchase intention. Importantly, perceived quality and social value mediated the relationship between eWOM and

purchase intention, and gender differences influenced how consumers responded to price, quality, and emotional cues. Therefore, the hypothesis is written as follows: H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and customer purchase intention.

In feed advertising

Customized and personalized in-feed ads improve brand memory, while emotional appeals positively influence sentiment and buying decisions. Informative, relevant ads increase favorable attitudes and purchase likelihood. User interactions such as likes and shares further strengthen trust and social impact. Incorporating user-generated content boosts brand trust and purchase intent, while social evidence, like visible likes, enhances consumer impressions. Operationally, platforms like Ocean Engine charge vendors per click or exposure time, with endorsers collaborating to create authentic product videos. Credibility, advertising style, website reputation, and product involvement shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Collectively, these studies confirm that in-feed advertising influences consumer behavior through emotional appeal, informativeness, social proof, and contextual relevance. Its seamless integration into feeds reduces resistance to persuasion, increases engagement, and outperforms traditional intrusive advertising. Thus, in-feed advertising emerges as a powerful marketing tool, capable of shaping consumer attitudes, strengthening brand equity, and driving purchase intentions across diverse contexts. Therefore, the hypothesis is written as follows: H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between In-Feed Advertising and customer purchase intention.

Materials and Methods

The researchers used purposive sampling to select participants who could provide valuable insights. This method helps find individuals who match specific criteria important to the study. The set of questionnaires will distribute to respondents who meet all three requirements: the respondent must have a TikTok account, the respondent never purchased the instant noodles, and the respondent's age must be around 19 years old until 32 years old. The researcher wants to target respondents who can provide insight into their desire to purchase when exposed to the strategy. The researcher's decision to select respondents aged between 19 and 32 years old is based on the aim to target the predominant TikTok users. Young adults in Malaysia, particularly those belonging to Generation Z (ages 19 to 25), make up the largest demographic on TikTok, accounting for 35.45% of users. Individuals between the ages of 26 and 32, known as millennials, make up 29% of the second-largest group. There are four section constructs that were measured by 17 items as shown in *Table 1* as follows.

Table 1. Measurement of construct.

Code	Modified item	Sources
Social Media Influencer (SMI)		
SMI1	1. I would like to try instant noodles product that TikTok's social media influencers have promoted.	-
SMI2	2. I am willing to purchase instant noodles product promoted by TikTok's social media influencers.	
SMI3	3. TikTok's review of social media influencers will help me decide to purchase instant noodles product	
SMI4	4. When looking at my favourite social media influencer's content, I feel he/she knows a lot about instant noodles product	

SMI5	5. When watching my favourite social media influencer's content, I consider he/she to be an expert in promoting instant noodles product	
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)		
EWOM1	1. I often read other consumers' online product reviews on TikTok to know whether instant noodles product make good impressions on others.	(Rao et al., 2021)
EWOM2	2. I frequently read other customers' online product reviews on TikTok to make sure I purchase the right instant noodles product	
EWOM3	3. I often read other customer reviews on the any instant noodles product TikTok pages to have confidence in my buying decision.	
EWOM4	4. I frequently gather information from online consumer product reviews on TikTok before I buy instant noodles product	
In Feed Advertising		
IFA1	1. In Feed Advertising by any instant noodles' product fits my TikTok's For You Page (FYP).	(Yang and Jiang, 2021)
IFA2	2. In Feed Advertising by instant noodles' product is consistent appear in my TikTok's For You Page (FYP).	
IFA3	3. In Feed Advertising by any instant noodles' product and my TikTok's For You Page (FYP) belong together based on my search engine.	
IFA4	4. In Feed Advertising by any instant noodles product interesting and make me purchase it.	
Customer Purchase Intention		
CPI1	1. I intend to buy product by instant noodles product on TikTok.	(Al-Dmour et al., 2023)
CPI2	2. Instant noodles product on TikTok has become my consideration for buying in the future.	
CPI3	3. In the future, if I want to buy food products on TikTok, it is likely I consider purchasing instant noodles product	
CPI4	4. I am considering purchasing a product from any instant noodles product based on the positive online reviews I came across on TikTok, which exemplifies the influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM) in shaping my decision.	

The researcher aimed to create a snowball effect, reaching a diverse and extensive audience. Respondents could conveniently engage with the questionnaire by simply clicking on the provided links or scanning QR codes shared on various platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram. This study employs a 5-point Likert scale to measure both independent and dependent variables. These scales are widely adopted in both academic and professional settings for their simplicity and effectiveness in capturing human sentiment (Biasetton et.al, 2023). The data will analyze using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to analyze the effectiveness of TikTok platform towards customer purchase intention.

Results and Discussion

Despite getting overwhelmed respond from the public, utilizing data from diverse answers provided by different people can enhance the quality and precision of this research, resulting in more accurate outcomes for the distributed question. From the 247 respondents who completed the Google form, only 169 fulfilled all the necessary criteria. Therefore, the remaining 78 respondents who did not match the requirements of the questionnaires would be eliminated from this research.

Out of 169 respondents, the majority were female (101; 59.8%), while males accounted for 68 (40.2%). Employment status showed 89 respondents (52.7%) were employed, compared to 80 (47.3%) unemployed. In terms of education, 19 respondents (11.2%) held SPM qualifications, 23.1% had Diplomas, 89 (52.7%) possessed Degrees, 18 (10.7%) were Master's students, and only 4 (2.4%) held PhDs. Regarding TikTok usage, the highest proportion (84; 49.7%) reported spending 3–4 hours daily, followed by 53 (31.4%) spending 1–2 hours, and 32 (18.9%) dedicating 5 or more hours. These demographics highlight TikTok's strong engagement across diverse groups.

Reliability analysis

According to the reliability test, most of the variables significant for social media influencers was 0.903 (independent variables), electronic word-of-mouth was 0.910 (independent variables), in-feed advertising was 0.911 (independent variables), and customer purchase intention was 0.915 (dependent variables). Cronbach's Alpha was in the range of 0.903 to 0.915, and it shows that all of the variables are accepted and found to be reliable for the study because the internal consistencies of all variables are excellent.

Table 2. Reliability coefficients for the major variables.

Items	No of Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Social Media Influencer	169	0.903	Very Good
Electronic Word-Of-Mouth	169	0.910	Excellent
In Feed Advertising	169	0.911	Excellent
Customer Purchase Intention	169	0.915	Excellent

Multiple regression

Regression analysis is a powerful and versatile approach based on exploring the associative relationship between a matrix-dependent variable and one or more independent ones. Simple linear and multiple linear models are common. It is often used for more advanced data sets with nonlinear relationships between dependent and independent variables. *Table 3* reveals the regression results whereby the value of the adjusted R square was 0.593, equivalent to 59.3%. This result indicates that the customer purchase intention can be explained by the independent variables in this study, which are social media influencers, electronic word-of-mouth and -feed advertising, with 59.3% accuracy. The remaining variance of 40.7% for the dependent variable can be described by other variables not tested in this research. *Table 4* above shows the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Based on the significant value, 0.000 is less than alpha 0.05. Researchers can conclude that the model is significant when it can be concluded that the overall effect of the independent variables on customer purchase intention is significant. Hence, this means that the model used in this study is 95% significant in confidence level with an F-statistics result of 80.283, and the model can be used for the prediction.

Table 3. R Square.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.770a	.593	.586	.539

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), SMI, EWOM, IFA.

Table 4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	69.960	3	23.320	80.283	.000b
Residual	47.928	165	.290		
Total	117.888	168			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: CPI_NEW. b. Predictors: (Constant), IFA_NEW, EWOM_NEW, SMI_NEW

All three independent variables were found to have a significant relationship with customer purchase intention, namely social media influencer (p=0.000), electronic word-of-mouth (p=0.000), and feed advertising (p=0.000), customer purchase intention towards instant noodle products. The result of the regression model, as presented in *Table 5*, indicates that social media influencer has a significant and positive relationship

with customer purchase intention ($B=0.335$, $p=0.000$). It shows that every 1% increase in social media influencers results in a 33.5% increase in customer purchase intention. Electronic word-of-mouth shows a significant and positive relationship with customer purchase intention ($B=0.321$, $p=0.000$). Every 1% increase in electronic word-of-mouth results in a 32.1% increase in customer purchase intention. Lastly, in-feed advertising has a significant and positive relation with customer purchase intention ($B=0.278$, $P=.000$). This value shows that every 1% increase in in-feed advertising results in a 27.8% increase in customer purchase intention.

Table 5. Regression coefficient.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.487	.241	-	2.018	.045
SMI	.354	.069	.335	5.104	.000
EWOM	.316	.062	.321	5.086	.000
IFA	.234	.050	.278	4.716	.000

Conclusion

The regression analysis highlights the significant influence of three independent variables such as social media influencers (SMIs), electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and in-feed advertising on customer purchase intention. Among these, SMIs emerged as the strongest predictor, with a beta value of 0.335, indicating that influencer reviews and endorsements substantially increase consumers' inclination to purchase instant noodle products. This aligns with Lou and Yuan (2019), who reported that 94% of marketers find influencer marketing effective, and Martínez-López et.al (2020), who noted that 89% believe its ROI equals or surpasses other tactics. Influencer marketing leverages credibility, reputation, and engagement to enhance product visibility and foster stronger consumer connections, particularly in environments with low engagement or distractions, where pleasurable and interactive content is most effective (Hughes et.al 2019). eWOM ranked second, with a beta value of 0.321, showing a significant and positive relationship with purchase intention.

This finding is consistent with Zhang et.al (2023), who demonstrated that eWOM positively impacts purchase intentions, behavior, and brand value, especially for complex or high-risk products and socially influential individuals. Ismagilova et.al (2020) similarly confirmed eWOM's robust effect on consumer decisions, emphasizing trust and social influence as key drivers. In-feed advertising, though the lowest contributor with a beta of 0.278, still showed a significant positive relationship with purchase intention. Growing relevance on short video platforms, noting its seamless integration with surrounding content, higher click-through rates, and contextual relevance. By blending naturally into feeds, in-feed ads reduce resistance to persuasion, enhance engagement, and outperform traditional intrusive advertising formats. Overall, the study demonstrates that SMIs, eWOM, and in-feed advertising collectively shape consumer purchase intentions, with influencers exerting the strongest impact.

Recommendations

Based on the demographic in the questionnaire that has been distributed to respondents, Social Media Influencers (SMIs) is the most familiar strategy, with a

frequency of 158 respondents and a contribution of 46.1% compared to two other strategies, which are in-feed advertising (30.9%) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (23.0%). Therefore, all instant noodle producers can enhance its interactive content engagement to empower their existing Social Media Influencers (SMIs).

In addition, consumers tend to view native advertisements 53% more frequently than display advertisements, resulting in an 18% boost in consumers' intention to purchase. Meanwhile, advertisements' perception is critical to their success. Therefore, the research findings indicated that the descriptive analysis of in-feed advertising yielded an overall mean of 3.76 with a standard deviation of 0.995. Notably, this factor obtained the lowest mean among the three independent variables in this study. Consequently, instant noodle producers should channel additional efforts and focus on enhancing its in-feed advertising performance, given its substantial contribution to the effectiveness of customer purchase intention.

According to the findings of an investigation, the study demonstrated that eWOM had a considerable beneficial influence on customers' intention to make a purchase. It is argued in Yang and Jiang (2021) study that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a crucial component in shaping consumer decision-making processes, and the growth of social media and online communities has magnified its impact. The research consisted of sample size respondents limited to Malaysian TikTok users aged 19-32 years old. The demographic data from the questionnaire stated that the highest frequency of TikTok usage per day (49.7%) is between three and four hours. Therefore, the proposed potential that instant noodle producers can implement is to collaborate with satisfied customers or influencers within the target age group to generate authentic and relatable eWOM content. The instant noodle producers can encourage satisfied customers to share their positive experiences with instant noodle products on TikTok, which can significantly influence potential customers within the same demographic.

Acknowledgement

This research is self-funded.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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