

A REVIEW: IMPACT OF VISUAL SENSORY MARKETING TOWARDS IMPULSE PURCHASE DECISION IN TIKTOK LIVESTREAMING

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Abstract. TikTok livestreaming has grown as one of the most influential social commerce platforms, especially among Gen Z and millennial consumers. In today's environment, the fast growth of the livestreaming commerce platform has changed the online shopping experience, for example, with the function of enabling interaction with streamers and, at the same time, assisting in immediate purchase decisions. Therefore, it is suggested that the role of visual sensory marketing elements contribute to the important roles to influence impulse purchase decisions in livestreaming commerce platform. This article review discusses the elements of visual sensory marketing and its relationship with impulse purchase decisions in TikTok livestreaming. Specifically, the discussion of this article has focused on two visual sensory marketing elements found in TikTok livestreaming, namely herding message and streamer attractiveness. Herding message is related to the real-time notification generated by the systems and visually displayed during a livestreaming session, and it becomes an indicator of the other viewers purchasing the products. While streamer attractiveness is related to the visual appeal, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness of the streamers, which can be captured by viewers during a livestreaming session. Based on previous literature related to livestreaming commerce, sensory marketing elements, and impulse purchase decisions, this article review has suggested an integrated conceptual framework that links visual sensory marketing elements with impulse purchase decisions. The discussion of this article review contributed to building knowledge on how visual sensory marketing elements can contribute to the impulse purchase decision in TikTok livestreaming, particularly for marketers, streamers, and businesses that are using TikTok livestreaming as a platform for marketing. The article also has suggested future research on sensory marketing in livestreaming commerce environments.

Keywords: *TikTok livestreaming, visual sensory marketing, herding message, streamer attractiveness, impulse purchase, social commerce*

Introduction

TikTok is an application for sharing videos which designed to enable users to create and share videos on any topic they desire. In September 2016, the application was launched by the Chinese startup company ByteDance (D'Souza, 2026). Before transitioning to TikTok, the app was formerly known as Musical.ly (Sharabati et al., 2022). The COVID-19 outbreak has led to an increase in TikTok recognition as a greater number of people are taking advantage of their mobile devices to get creative ways of interacting with others, conducting business, and making purchases (Pongratte et al., 2023). After the epidemic, TikTok quickly became the social network with the highest growth rate (Barta et al., 2023) and the social media and video platform with the greatest number of users all over the world. TikTokShop livestreaming is the new way to shop. The site first concentrated on short video content, but it eventually expanded the function to online shopping, allowing viewers to purchase things while watching live streaming (Ahmadi and Hudrasyah, 2022). In addition to allowing users to engage

with their followers in real time through comments, live video streaming on TikTok can let users monetise their accounts by earning "gifts" from their live stream audience. Through TikTok livestreaming, streamers or sellers are able to present their goods and services in real time via live stream, and customers can instantly buy broadcast goods without leaving the platform (Mileva, 2024).

In addition to this, TikTok has real-time video functions whereby it allows streamers to demonstrate products animatedly and provide high quality information while shortening time needed for decision-making. In terms of viewers, TikTok has arisen to be a main hub for product discovery among young consumers. It shows that this platform become extremely popular among young generation such Generation Z (Rahayu et al., 2025) This implies that the TikTok livestreaming platform has become an excellent choice for marketers looking to attract younger audiences, providing a diverse platform.

Overview of sensory marketing

The primary way that people learn about their physical surroundings is through their sensory systems (Fan et al., 2023). As a result, manufacturers and retailers have greatly utilized sensory marketing to generate favorable consumer responses such as word-of-mouth, formation of attitude, and buying decisions (Hamacher et al., 2022). This can be defined as marketing techniques that use consumer appeals to their senses to influence their behavior (Fong et al., 2023). Sensory marketing encompasses five human sensory stimuli: gustation, olfaction, audition, vision, and touch (Hamacher et al., 2022). Sensory responses may be formed purposefully or unintentionally through these modalities once consumers acquire signals from the external environment (Kaushik and Gokhale, 2022). It is proven that sensory elements such as visual stimuli (light, bright, and vivid color) in store decoration can influence consumer purchase behavior in clothing (Tekin and Kanat, 2023). Sensory elements have been affecting consumers' behavior, according to previous studies. Specifically, in the context of impulse purchase studies, numerous factors in the social commerce environment, such as visual appeal (Lee et al., 2023) and acoustics (Goel et al., 2024), are recognized as stimuli.

Overview of tiktok visual sensory marketing

Herding message

The study on consumer herding behavior within the field of consumer buying is relatively new, and scholars have only recently begun to pay attention to it (Ali and Amir, 2024). Herd behavior can be defined as a situation "where people are doing what other people are doing" (Banerjee, 1992). Herd behavior also means that individuals in a group follow others' behavior (Liu, 2022). On the other hand, herding purchase behavior in social commerce can be defined as a phenomenon where individuals follow others when purchasing products (Chen et al., 2022). It suggested that when people display herd behavior, they tend to disregard their own beliefs and tend to imitate or follow other people's behavior in decision-making. Social media user frequently use social proof to confirm their behaviour and match their behavior with other crowd. It shows that social proof has become influence strategy that demonstrates product popularity and demand (Huang et al. 2025). Based on the study by Huang et al. (2025) in short form video (SFV) commerce, social proof has been measure through peripheral route (number of likes, number of comments and central route (product attraction and

media attraction). In the context of TikTok ecosystem, automated interface cues are known as herding message. Although previous studies have rarely used the term "herding message," sales signal such as "User XY has purchased" are suggested and can be treated as social proof. Fei et al. (2021) has initially introduced the idea of the herding message in the context of livestreaming, based on their eye-tracking research (Chen et al., 2022).

According to Fei et al. (2021), herding message consists of the exclusive sales online signal that represents other consumer purchase behavior such as "User XY has purchased" or through the indicator such as "20 people are viewing the cart". It is suggested that in the TikTok platform, we can visually see that other customers have purchased the product during the livestreaming session through the notification of "Customer XX is buying". This notification also usually will appear automatically on the customer's smartphone screen during the livestreaming session. Fei et al. (2021) discovered that viewers pay more visual attention to products purchased by a large number of customers when they are presented with a herding message. In this study, the researcher believes that herding messages are a crucial factor that influences customers' visual perceptions during TikTok livestreaming as viewers of livestreaming can directly see the herding message by using their eyes. Furthermore, an experimental study conducted by Fei et al. (2021) and Chen et al. (2023) has provided valuable insight into the importance of the herding message as a visual element in livestreaming sales.

Streamer attractiveness

Streamer attractiveness can be defined as the capacity of streamers to attract viewers to streamers, such as external appearance, social interaction, and internal traits (Li et al., 2024). Streamers are significant in the realm of livestreaming as they engage in product trials, introductions, and audience interaction via real-time question-and-answer sessions with the aim of promoting and facilitating product sales (Li et al. 2024). By actively involving consumers in the product-understanding process, anchors play a pivotal role in live-streaming commerce (Liu et al., 2023). In the livestreaming commerce atmosphere, anchors' characteristics have a significant influence on consumer psychology, which can change consumers' opinions and decisions to buy. In livestreaming commerce, the purchase decisions of customers are heavily influenced by the traits of anchors (Guo et al., 2022). These days, livestreaming e-commerce businesses understand how important the role of anchors' characteristics in contending for audience interests (Li et al., 2024). One of the determinants that have been examined in the relation of livestreaming commerce is anchor attractiveness (Guo et al., 2022). In this article review, in measuring visual senses that influence impulse purchase decisions in TikTok livestreaming, it suggested using anchor attractiveness as one of the important variable. This is because streamer attractiveness becomes one of the elements that can be seen directly by using the eyes of the customer during a livestreaming session.

Anchor attractiveness is usually related to an individual's physical attractiveness (Von Mettenheim and Wiedmann, 2023). This aligns with the suggestion by Li et al. (2024), which claims that anchor attractiveness is one of the important anchor characteristics in livestreaming. Anchor attractiveness, specifically personal charm, has the strongest influence on consumers' pleasure emotions, which in turn affects their impulse purchase decisions during livestreaming (Li et al., 2024). Anchor attractiveness can be divided into physical attractiveness, external appearance, and social

attractiveness (Li et al., 2024). It is suggested in TikTok livestreaming that customers typically perceive physical attractiveness and external appearance through their visual senses during livestreaming sessions. Therefore, these elements should not be ignored and are worth investigating. Physical attractiveness can be defined as the degree of attractiveness of the anchors' appearance and can be used as an external stimulus that can affect consumer behavior. (Tang et al., 2024). This indicates that the anchor has a more attractive appearance and image, which can create a visual impact, be pleasing to the eye, and enhance the enjoyment of watching a livestream (Dong et al., 2023).

Overview of impulse purchase decision

According to Rook (1987), impulse purchase can be defined as a sudden, powerful, persistent urge to buy something immediately. An extended definition by Beatty and Ferrel (1998) recognize the impulse purchase as sudden, immediate, and without pre-shopping intention. Previous studies have identified products that people buy impulsively during live streaming, including fashion products like apparel (Kristi et al., 2023) and cosmetic products (Nugraha et al., 2024). According to Shirazi et al. (2022), social commerce remains a widely used approach for conducting online shopping. Zhao et al. (2023) stated that live streaming commerce is an evolving component of social commerce that involves interactions between sellers and customers. Anchors also have a significant effect on sustaining the entertainment element of livestreaming commerce, which in turn influences customer behavior by promoting impulsive purchases through product attraction (Lo et al., 2022). Research conducted by Leong et al. (2022) revealed that the competence and attractiveness of streamers and personal image (Chen et al., 2022) have a significant impact on consumers' impulse buy decisions. According to Lee and Chen (2021), the study's findings indicate that in the context of live streaming purchasing, customers who experience external stimuli are likely to exhibit cognitive emotions that influence their emotional state and then lead to impulsive purchase intentions.

Linking visual sensory marketing elements to impulse purchase decisions

Literature has shown one of the anchor characteristics that scholars frequently investigate to understand the impulse purchase decisions phenomenon in the context of livestreaming commerce is anchor attractiveness (Rahma and Ridanasti, 2023). In livestreaming, anchors are a critical group that is responsible for leading the livestreaming activities. They are frequently responsible for encouraging customers to click and make product purchases (Li et al., 2024). In livestreaming commerce, anchor attractiveness has been seen as characteristics from the anchor that contribute to impulse purchase decisions. According to Von Mettenheim and Wiedmann (2023), anchor attractiveness can be determined by individual physical attractiveness. In this article review, it is suggested that physical attractiveness is something that can be seen by the viewers through a livestreaming session. Study Leong et al. (2022) claim anchor attractiveness has been found to influence impulse purchase decisions in livestreaming commerce. Furthermore, Sun and Qu (2024) stated the outer beauty of the anchor's face and body has a positive influence on customers' enthusiasm to remain watching the livestreaming session and their later influence on their impulse purchasing decisions. The attractiveness of anchors has been shown to affect customer trust during livestreaming sessions, as shown in the study by Ma et.al (2024) which indicates that

the physical attractiveness of an anchor serves as a mediating factor influencing customer trust, ultimately leading to impulse purchase decisions.

While the specific phrase of "herding message" is in an early stage and limited in the social commerce literature, the basic fact of this phenomenon is deeply established in topics such as social proof factors such as number of likes and comments. This is because, we also can see these notifications on the screen of live video social commerce platforms; therefore, it can be treated as well as similar and part of a herding message. According to study by Huang (2025), social proof evidence such as number of likes and comments has significantly impact on the impulse purchase decision in short-form video (SFV) platform. Herd behaviour is found to most dominant behavior in influencing individual decision making (Pham et al., 2023). While, for herding message, according to Liu and Jin (2026), in livestream commerce, the herd effect, which is viewers' observable and participation activities, becomes the main factor that influences impulse purchase behavior in the livestreaming commerce environment. It shows the "herding" stimuli such as real-time comment volume, larger viewer counts, and perceived product popularity also affect consumers' interior state.

Designing an integrated conceptual framework

In this article review, a following conceptual framework has been proposed to incorporate the visual sensory marketing elements namely herding message and streamer attractiveness and impulse purchases. *Figure 1* presents the framework.

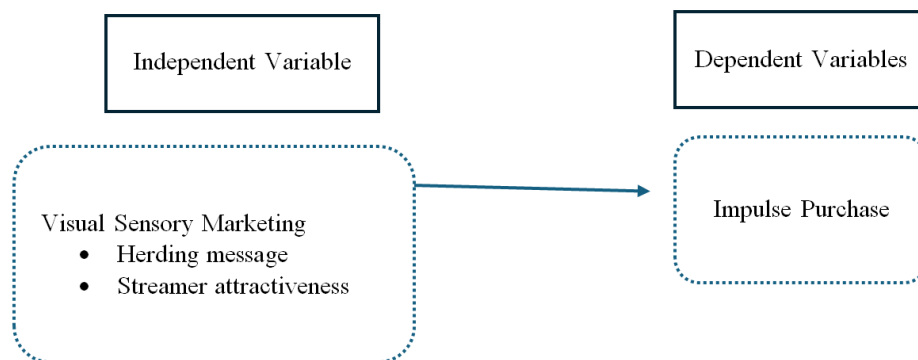


Figure 1. Integrated conceptual framework.

Practical implication

With the context of visual sensory element, it is proven that streamer attractiveness contributed to many benefits in enhancing visual senses of viewers in livestreaming commerce, particularly in TikTok livestreaming. Therefore, it is suggested for TikTok livestreaming marketers to focusing on recruiting streamer that have good visual appeal to attract the visual senses of consumers. The marketers may consider allocating some resources in recruiting a handsome, beautiful and famous streamers to entice customers to buy more and involve themselves in impulse purchase decisions. Famous streamers for example has been found to one of the factor that influence viewers' purchase decisions in livestreaming commerce. However, despite of benefits given by the visual sensory elements, it is advisable for livestreaming marketers to not only focusing on the streamer attractiveness alone because other factors like streamer expertise and interactivity skills also has been found to be another important factors that contributed

to impulse purchase decision in livestreaming commerce environment. This matches the suggestion by Nurfadilah and Ridanasti (2023): streamer attractiveness is not a standalone factor to drive purchase intention, even if it initially seems to be part of factors to capture audience intention in livestreaming. Thus, as suggested by Gong and Jiang (2023), other factors such as perceived product knowledge and expertise must also be part of the consideration factors. They added that when the charismatic host in livestreaming and provide expert feedback through demonstration of the product, it can stimulate cognitive and affective emotions of viewers and make them buy on impulse. Therefore, by combining the streamer attractiveness and the knowledge, it can be used to influence the impulse purchase decision in livestreaming commerce.

As for herding messages as the second important visual sensory element in TikTok livestreaming, it is suggested for marketers to fully utilize the benefits of herding messages that appear visually on customer screen during a livestreaming session. Thus, the utilization of the herding message in TikTok livestreaming lies behind the ability of the message to provide high-authority visual cues that can influence impulse purchase decisions among viewers. Practically, the effectiveness of the herding message relies much on the ability of the streamer to provide immediate verbal acknowledgement through interactivity skills of individual purchases. For example, when streamer says "Wow, Sarah has bought the product, thank you!" it may become visually and auditory signals to other viewers that might encourage them to follow the herd. In addition, recent study by Liu et al. (2025) stated that anchor interactions can triggered customers inspirations that can help them generate ideas and shorten the decision making process. Thus, combining the usage of the herding message and interaction from streamers seems a tactical strategies to encourage impulse purchase decision in the context of TikTok livestreaming commerce.

Conclusion

TikTok livestreaming commerce has emerged as a platform that changes the social commerce landscape by integrating real-time interaction, entertainment, and purchasing into a sole digital platform. With the rapid growth of livestreaming commerce, it is suggested that it is important to understand consumer behavior, especially with relation to impulse purchase decisions during livestreaming sessions. Based on the literature review that has been discussed in this article, it is shown that visual sensory marketing elements such as herding messages and streamer attractiveness play important roles in influencing viewers' purchase decisions in the TikTok livestreaming environment. In this article, the authors have specifically discussed the two important visual sensory marketing elements, which are herding messages and streamer attractiveness. Herding message is associated with real-time purchase notifications displayed on the viewer's screen during livestreaming sessions. These messages were found to encourage other viewers to imitate buying behavior of other viewers, which may contribute to impulse purchase decisions. Meanwhile, streamer attractiveness is related to physical appearance, visual appeal and social attractiveness of streamers, which is can be visually seen by the customer during livestreaming sessions. Through the streamer attractiveness, it was found to contribute to impulse purchase decision livestreaming commerce. Overall, this article review contributes to the growth of the knowledge on sensory marketing and its influence on consumer behavior in TikTok livestreaming commerce. With the proposed conceptual framework in this article, it may create some

foundation for future empirical investigation to further understand the relationship between visual sensory elements and its role in influencing impulse purchase decision especially in a livestreaming context. Future studies also may consider examining additional sensory elements such as auditory or haptic senses and emotions as mediators and other potential moderating variables to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of impulse purchase decisions that occur in livestreaming commerce environments.

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Conflict of interest

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

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