

The Effects of Promotion and User-Generated Content on Purchase Decisions with Brand Image as a Mediating Variable for the Facetology Brand on TikTok

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Abstract

TikTok has become a platform that integrates entertainment, promotion, and transactions, exerting a substantial influence on consumers' purchasing behavior. This study aims to analyze the effects of Promotion and User-Generated Content on Purchase Decision, with Brand Image as a mediating variable, for Facetology products on TikTok. The study adopted a quantitative approach using a survey method. The sample consisted of 160 students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon who had purchased Facetology products through TikTok and were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that Promotion has no significant direct effect on Purchase Decision, whereas User-Generated Content has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision. These findings indicate that strengthening brand image is an important factor in improving the effectiveness of digital promotion and user-generated content in encouraging consumers' purchase decisions on social commerce platforms.

Keywords

Promotion; User-Generated Content; Brand Image; Purchase Decision; TikTok.



I. Introduction

The development of information technology has transformed how companies interact with consumers through digital media. The integration of the internet with commercial activities has given rise to social commerce, which involves buying and selling activities that use social media simultaneously for communication, promotion, and transactions (Kotler et al., 2024). This transformation means that purchase decision-making is no longer influenced solely by companies' marketing communications, but also by interactions among users, digital recommendations, and consumer experiences shared through social media (Hair et al., 2022).

TikTok is one of the platforms that has grown rapidly in supporting social commerce activities. It no longer serves merely as a short-video entertainment platform; it has evolved into a digital marketing ecosystem through TikTok Shop, live shopping, and the For You Page (FYP) algorithm, which displays content aligned with users' preferences. According to the data presented in this thesis, Indonesia has the largest number of TikTok users worldwide, making the platform a promising marketing channel for various companies, particularly those in the beauty industry.

The beauty industry is one of the sectors that has benefited substantially from the development of social commerce. Skincare products dominate transactions on TikTok, supported by the platform's visual and interactive characteristics and its ability to demonstrate product-use experiences directly through videos and live streaming. These conditions have intensified competition among skincare companies in using digital marketing

strategies to attract consumers' attention and encourage purchase decisions (Kotler et al., 2024).

Facetology is a local skincare brand that has successfully capitalized on these developments. The brand has recorded strong sales growth on TikTok and has become one of the market leaders in sunscreen products in Indonesia. This success is supported by intensive digital promotional activities, creative content, and high levels of consumer interaction through social media. Nevertheless, high sales do not necessarily reflect consumer loyalty to the brand, as some purchase decisions are influenced by social media trends and content that goes viral on the For You Page (FYP).

From a marketing perspective, promotion is an element of the marketing mix that communicates product value to consumers and encourages purchase decisions (Kotler et al., 2024). On TikTok, promotional activities take various forms, including flash sales, vouchers, live streaming, educational content, and direct purchase links. These strategies enable consumers to access information and complete transactions on a single platform. However, the preliminary survey results indicate that consumers consider promotional programs offering short-term incentives, such as flash sales and vouchers, to be less than optimal. Therefore, promotional effectiveness needs further improvement.

In addition to company-led promotion, consumers' purchase decisions are influenced by User-Generated Content (UGC). According to Latief Z. Nur et al. (2024), UGC is content voluntarily created by users based on their product-use experiences and is therefore perceived as more authentic than company-generated marketing communications. Through review videos, product-use tutorials, and consumer testimonials, UGC provides information that helps prospective buyers evaluate products before making a purchase. However, the growing prevalence of fake reviews, paid online promoters, and manipulative content has led consumers to question the credibility of UGC. The preliminary survey in this study also indicates that most respondents remain doubtful about the authenticity of reviews of Facetology products on TikTok.

The effects of Promotion and User-Generated Content on purchase decisions are expected to occur through the formation of Brand Image rather than directly. Keller (2013) explains that brand image consists of the perceptions and associations linked to a brand in consumers' memories. A positive brand image can increase consumers' confidence in product quality and thereby encourage purchase decisions. Conversely, negative reviews concerning product incompatibility, unsatisfactory product-use experiences, or product safety issues may weaken brand image and reduce consumers' willingness to purchase.

Previous researchers have extensively examined Promotion, User-Generated Content, Brand Image, and Purchase Decision. However, most studies have tested direct relationships between variables or focused on conventional e-commerce platforms. Research integrating Promotion and User-Generated Content in a social commerce context, with Brand Image as a mediating variable for local skincare brands on TikTok, remains relatively limited. Accordingly, this study is expected to address this research gap and enrich the literature on consumer behavior in the digital marketing era.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the effects of Promotion and User-Generated Content on Purchase Decision, with Brand Image as a mediating variable, among users of Facetology products on TikTok. The findings are expected to contribute to marketing knowledge, particularly concerning social commerce strategies, and

provide guidance for companies in designing digital promotional strategies and managing content that strengthens brand image and encourages consumers' purchase decisions.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory

This study uses Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory as its conceptual foundation to explain how digital marketing stimuli influence consumer behavior. According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), S-O-R theory explains that stimuli received by individuals affect their internal states (organism), which subsequently produce behavioral responses (response). In the social commerce context, promotion and user-generated content represent the stimuli, brand image represents the organism, and purchase decision represents the response.

The development of social media has expanded the forms of stimuli received by consumers, which now originate not only from companies but also from user communities. These interactions shape perceptions of a brand before ultimately influencing consumers' purchase decisions. Recent studies also show that the S-O-R mechanism remains highly relevant in explaining consumer behavior on digital and social commerce platforms.

2.2 Promotion

Promotion refers to marketing communication activities intended to convey information, generate interest, persuade consumers, and encourage purchases. According to Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2024), promotion is part of the marketing mix that companies use to create value, build customer relationships, and increase demand for products or services.

In digital environments, promotion extends beyond conventional advertising to include live streaming, flash sales, short videos, social media advertising, and interactive promotions that enable two-way communication between companies and consumers. Effective digital promotional strategies can attract consumers' attention, strengthen brand perceptions, and encourage purchase decisions through more engaging shopping experiences.

2.3 User-Generated Content

User-Generated Content (UGC) refers to digital content voluntarily created by users based on their experiences with a product or brand. UGC includes reviews, comments, photographs, videos, and testimonials published on social media, which can serve as information sources for prospective consumers.

Islam et al. (2024) explain that UGC is a form of digital communication with greater credibility than company-generated communications because it is perceived to reflect consumers' actual experiences. Authentic UGC can increase consumer trust, strengthen brand image, and encourage both purchase intentions and purchase decisions.

Recent research also shows that on short-video platforms such as TikTok and Xiaohongshu, video-based UGC has a stronger influence on consumer perceptions than static content because it can increase perceived value and consumers' emotional engagement.

2.4 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the perceptions, beliefs, and associations formed in consumers' minds regarding a brand as a result of their experiences, marketing communications, and information received from various sources. Keller (2013) explains that brand image is an important corporate asset because it differentiates products from those of competitors and increases consumer trust.

In the digital marketing era, brand image formation is influenced not only by companies' promotional activities but also by consumer experiences shared on social media.

Recent studies show that the combination of firm-generated content and user-generated content can strengthen brand image, thereby positively affecting consumers' purchase decisions on TikTok.

2.5 Purchase Decision

Purchase decision refers to the consumer decision-making process of selecting, evaluating, and purchasing a product according to individual needs and preferences. According to Kotler et al. (2024), purchase decisions are influenced by various factors, including individual characteristics, companies' marketing activities, consumer experiences, and brand perceptions.

In social commerce environments, purchase decisions are influenced not only by product quality but also by consumers' digital experiences through social media. Recent research has found that digital promotion, user-generated content, and brand image play significant roles in encouraging consumers' purchase decisions, particularly on TikTok, which integrates entertainment, social interaction, and transactions within a single ecosystem.

III. Research Methods

This study adopted a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to test causal relationships among Promotion, User-Generated Content, Brand Image, and Purchase Decision. A quantitative approach was selected because it can objectively explain relationships between variables through hypothesis testing based on numerical data (Sugiyono, 2023). The study aims to analyze the effects of Promotion and User-Generated Content on Purchase Decision, with Brand Image as a mediating variable, among users of Facetology products on TikTok. The study is cross-sectional, with data collected during a single period through a survey using a structured questionnaire.

The study population comprised students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon who used TikTok and had purchased Facetology products. Non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method was employed because respondents were selected according to specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. Respondents were required to be: (1) students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, (2) active TikTok users, and (3) individuals who had purchased Facetology products through TikTok.

The sample size was determined based on the recommendation of Hair et al. (2022), who state that Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) studies require a minimum sample size of 5–10 times the number of indicators used. This study included 32 indicators, yielding a minimum sample size of 160 respondents (5×32 indicators). This number met the minimum requirements for PLS-SEM analysis, enabling adequate parameter estimation.

Research data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms and measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The research instrument was developed using indicators adapted from previous studies for each research variable: Promotion, User-Generated Content, Brand Image, and Purchase Decision. Before analysis, the instrument was evaluated to ensure construct validity and reliability.

The independent variables in this study were Promotion (X1) and User-Generated Content (X2), while Purchase Decision (Y) served as the dependent variable. Brand Image (Z) was positioned as a mediating variable explaining how the two independent variables influence purchase decisions. The conceptual model was developed based on Stimulus–

Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory, in which Promotion and User-Generated Content represent the stimuli, Brand Image represents the organism, and Purchase Decision represents the response.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software. PLS-SEM was selected because it can analyze research models involving both direct and indirect relationships through mediating variables and does not impose strict normal distribution assumptions (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis included evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) through assessments of convergent validity, discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach’s Alpha. The structural model (inner model) was subsequently evaluated using R^2 , path coefficients, and bootstrapping to test the significance of relationships between variables. Mediation effects were analyzed using Specific Indirect Effects, with hypotheses accepted when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2022).

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Research Results

The study involved 160 respondents who were students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, active TikTok users, and purchasers of Facetology products. All constructs met the criteria for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability, making the research model suitable for hypothesis testing. In addition, Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all variables exceeded 0.70.

Structural model evaluation yielded an R^2 value of 0.694 for Brand Image and 0.748 for Purchase Decision. These values indicate that the model explains 69.4% of the variance in Brand Image and 74.8% of the variance in Purchase Decision, while the remaining variance is attributable to factors outside the research model.

Table 1. Coefficients of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Brand Image	0.694	Moderate–Strong
Purchase Decision	0.748	Strong

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4 (2026).

The results of hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship between Variables	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Promotion → Purchase Decision	0.090	1.281	0.100	Rejected
H2	User-Generated Content → Purchase Decision	0.248	2.774	0.003	Accepted
H3	Promotion → Brand Image	Positive	>1.96	<0.05	Accepted
H4	User-Generated Content → Brand Image	Positive	>1.96	<0.05	Accepted
H5	Brand Image → Purchase Decision	Positive	>1.96	<0.05	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

The results show that Promotion has no direct effect on Purchase Decision. In contrast, the effects of User-Generated Content on Purchase Decision, Promotion on Brand Image, User-Generated Content on Brand Image, and Brand Image on Purchase Decision are positive and significant. This summary is consistent with the study's main findings.

Furthermore, mediation testing shows that Brand Image mediates both the relationship between Promotion and Purchase Decision and the relationship between User-Generated Content and Purchase Decision.

Table 3. Summary of Mediation Test Results

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H6	Promotion $\rightarrow$ Brand Image $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	0.234	3.312	0.000	Significant Mediation
H7	User-Generated Content $\rightarrow$ Brand Image $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	0.282	3.510	0.000	Significant Mediation

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Overall, the findings show that Brand Image plays an important mediating role in explaining how Promotion and User-Generated Content influence Purchase Decision among users of Facetology products on TikTok.

4.2 Discussion

a. Effect of Promotion on Purchase Decision

The results show that Promotion has no significant effect on Purchase Decision for Facetology products on TikTok. This finding indicates that various forms of digital promotion, such as vouchers, discounts, flash sales, and live streaming promotions, have not become the main factors encouraging consumers to purchase. In the social commerce context, consumers tend to give greater consideration to product quality, other users' experiences, and trust in the brand than to promotional stimuli alone.

This finding differs from that of Puspitarini et al. (2024), who found that promotion had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions for cosmetic products during live streaming. This difference may be attributable to the characteristics of the research setting and consumer behavior. In Puspitarini et al. (2024), promotion occurred during real-time transactions (live commerce), which could create purchase urgency. In the present study, however, most respondents were students who tended to evaluate products more rationally before making a purchase.

This finding also indicates that promotion serves only as an initial stimulus, as explained by Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory. Promotional stimuli alone are insufficient to produce purchase decisions unless they can first generate positive brand perceptions.

b. Effect of User-Generated Content on Purchase Decision

This study demonstrates that User-Generated Content has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision. This means that higher-quality reviews, product-use experiences, and consumer recommendations shared through TikTok increase consumers' likelihood of purchasing Facetology products.

This finding is consistent with Islam et al. (2024), who state that User-Generated Content increases information credibility and can therefore encourage both purchase

intentions and purchase decisions. Similarly, Purnami and Putra (2025) show that user-created content on TikTok positively affects purchase decisions because it is perceived as more authentic than company advertising.

These conditions indicate that consumers today place greater trust in users' actual experiences than in company-generated marketing communications. Review videos, product demonstrations, and customer testimonials provide social proof that can reduce consumer uncertainty before a transaction.

c. Effect of Promotion on Brand Image

The results show that Promotion has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image. This indicates that Facetology's promotional activities on TikTok can improve consumers' positive perceptions of the brand.

This finding supports Firmansyah Tonda et al. (2024), who found that digital promotion positively influences brand image formation in the cosmetics industry. Furthermore, Kotler et al. (2024) explain that promotion aims not only to increase sales but also to build brand awareness, strengthen brand associations, and increase consumer confidence in products.

Accordingly, creative, consistent, and relevant promotional strategies can strengthen Facetology's position as a competitive local skincare brand on TikTok.

d. Effect of User-Generated Content on Brand Image

The results show that User-Generated Content has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image. The more positive the experiences users share through social media, the more favorable consumers' perceptions of the Facetology brand become.

This finding is consistent with Purnami and Putra (2025), who demonstrated that User-Generated Content on TikTok can improve Brand Image by providing information perceived as more objective and trustworthy. Yen et al. (2024) also explain that UGC enhances perceived product quality and brand credibility, thereby strengthening brand image in consumers' eyes.

In social commerce environments, consumers receive information not only from companies but also form perceptions based on other users' experiences. Therefore, UGC is an important factor in brand image formation.

e. Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

This study shows that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision. This means that the more positive Facetology's brand image is, the more likely consumers are to make a purchase.

This finding is consistent with Purnami and Putra (2025), who show that Brand Image positively affects purchase decisions among TikTok users. It also supports Keller's (2013) theory that brand image consists of associations held in consumers' memories and serves as a basis for their evaluation before making a purchase.

A positive brand image increases consumers' confidence in product quality, thereby reducing perceived risk in the purchasing process.

f. Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Effect of Promotion on Purchase Decision

The test results show that Brand Image positively and significantly mediates the relationship between Promotion and Purchase Decision. This finding indicates that digital promotion does not directly encourage purchase decisions; rather, it first creates positive brand perceptions, which subsequently encourage purchase decisions.

This finding supports Purnami and Putra (2025), who show that Brand Image is a mediating variable that strengthens the effect of marketing communications on purchase decisions. Accordingly, companies need to do more than increase promotional intensity; they must also ensure that each promotional activity builds a positive brand image.

g. Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Effect of User-Generated Content on Purchase Decision

This study also shows that Brand Image mediates the relationship between User-Generated Content and Purchase Decision. This means that user-created content not only provides product information but also generates positive brand perceptions, thereby encouraging purchase decisions.

This finding is consistent with Yen et al. (2024) and Purnami and Putra (2025), who state that the effect of User-Generated Content on purchase decisions becomes stronger when it improves brand image. Higher quality, credibility, and authenticity of user-shared content result in stronger positive consumer perceptions of the brand.

Overall, the findings reinforce Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory, in which Promotion and User-Generated Content serve as the stimuli, Brand Image as the organism, and Purchase Decision as the response. This indicates that brand image formation is a key mechanism explaining how digital marketing activities on TikTok influence consumers' purchasing behavior.

V. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the effects of Promotion and User-Generated Content on Purchase Decision, with Brand Image as a mediating variable, among users of Facetology products on TikTok. The PLS-SEM analysis results show that Promotion has no significant direct effect on Purchase Decision, indicating that consumers' purchase decisions are not determined solely by companies' promotional activities. Conversely, User-Generated Content has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision, indicating that user-created content, such as reviews, testimonials, and product-use experiences, plays an important role in encouraging purchase decisions.

Furthermore, both Promotion and User-Generated Content have positive and significant effects on Brand Image, indicating that effective promotional activities and authentic user content can strengthen consumers' positive perceptions of the Facetology brand. This study also demonstrates that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision, making brand image an important factor in encouraging consumers to purchase.

Mediation testing shows that Brand Image significantly mediates both the relationship between Promotion and Purchase Decision and the relationship between User-Generated Content and Purchase Decision. These findings confirm that brand image formation is a key mechanism explaining how promotional strategies and user-generated content can encourage consumers' purchase decisions. Accordingly, companies are advised to focus not only on increasing promotional intensity but also on developing strategies that encourage authentic User-Generated Content and strengthen Brand Image to optimize digital marketing effectiveness on TikTok.

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