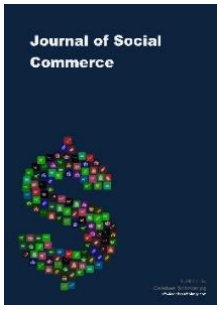

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The Influence of Promotion on Repurchase Interest Mediated by Cash-On-Delivery Payments on Tiktok Shop

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Abstract

In the shifting landscape of digital commerce, where attention is monetized and trust remains precarious, promotions alone no longer suffice to sustain consumer behavior. This study interrogates the relationship between promotional stimuli and repurchase interest within TikTok Shop, situating Cash-on-Delivery as a mediating variable that reconfigures how consumers interpret value, risk, and reliability. Drawing on quantitative data from urban Indonesian consumers and tested through a structural equation model, the findings reveal that promotional effectiveness is contingent not only on its visibility or appeal but on the presence of structural reassurance that transforms interest into intention and intention into behavior. Cash-on-Delivery, often relegated to logistical convenience, emerges here as a psychological architecture that stabilizes trust in a landscape shaped by speed and spectacle. Rather than acting as an isolated payment method, it becomes the mechanism through which promotional rhetoric is translated into credible action. In a digital environment where persuasion is abundant but safety is scarce, platforms that fail to integrate these dimensions do not merely lose transactions. They lose relevance. This study argues that the future of social commerce lies not in amplifying promotional volume but in curating transactional conditions where trust is embedded, not assumed. The implication is clear. Behavioral continuity in digital markets will belong not to the loudest voice but to the most structurally coherent experience.

Introduction

The transformation of commerce in the digital age cannot be adequately understood without acknowledging the intensifying convergence of social interaction and consumer behavior, particularly as instantiated in platforms like TikTok Shop. No longer is digital commerce merely a replication of physical retail on a digital plane; rather, it constitutes an immersive socio-technological ecosystem in which transactional logic is shaped as much by affective narratives as by utilitarian value. In this emergent terrain, promotion ceases to be a simple act of informing consumers; it becomes a performative spectacle that invites participation, constructs desirability, and engineers perceived necessity (Puri & Ratnasari, 2023; Kozinets et

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al., 2004). The specific affordances of TikTok short-form video, virality mechanisms, and algorithmic amplification enable promotional content to blur the lines between entertainment and persuasion. As noted by Kozinets (2022), such platforms reconfigure the temporal rhythm of consumption itself, pushing users into a constant loop of watching, engaging, and purchasing, often without conscious deliberation. Yet, the efficacy of such promotional tactics is not reducible to exposure or frequency; it is contingent on the trust infrastructures that render promotional appeals credible and actionable (Czinkota et al., 2021; Rajput et al., 2024). Without such scaffolding, promotional intensity may lead to fatigue, skepticism, or even disengagement a dynamic that is especially pronounced in high-context cultures like Indonesia, where interpersonal trust and contextual assurances remain central to decision-making (Suyatno et al., 2017).

This raises the analytical necessity of interrogating not just what promotions do, but under what conditions they translate into repurchase behaviora metric far more demanding than one-time conversions. Unlike initial purchases, which may be triggered by novelty, discounting, or social proof, repurchase decisions emerge from a cumulative cognitive-affective calculus, informed by prior experience, perceived reliability, and payment safety (Sunandar, 2024; Ayu et al., 2016). Recent behavioral studies underscore the relational character of repurchase intention, showing how consumers develop quasi-relational expectations from platforms that meet their affective and practical thresholds (Boudreau, 2021). In this sense, the reappearance of promotional content within the user's algorithmic feed is not sufficient unless it resonates with prior trustful interactions. Promotion, then, cannot be interpreted in isolation but must be situated within the broader ecology of credibility, perceived risk, and payment modality. This is especially salient in a digital culture where consumer confidence is frequently destabilized by scams, delivery failures, and poor product quality, rendering trust mechanisms non-negotiable. It is in this context that Cash-on-Delivery (COD) emerges not as a mere payment method but as a psychosocial cue of accountability, safety, and deferred risk.

The role of COD as a mediating infrastructure in Indonesian e-commerce is therefore not auxiliary but foundational. It represents a culturally adaptive strategy that aligns with the transactional anxieties of digital consumers navigating a landscape of asymmetrical information and platform opacity (Sulastri, 2025; Aqil et al., 2022; Usman & Shaheen, 2023). In empirical terms, multiple studies have shown that the inclusion of COD options significantly enhances not only conversion rates but also the likelihood of customer retention (Jahan & Sanam, 2024; Lewis, 2006). From a theoretical perspective, COD can be interpreted through the lens of signaling theory, where it signals platform accountability and product deliverability, mitigating the trust deficit inherent in virtual transactions. Moreover, its very structure, pay after receiving, acts as a micro-institutional mechanism that disciplines sellers into greater transparency and reduces consumers' cognitive burden when facing post-purchase regret (Zhang, 2018; Shamim & Mohan, 2025). Unlike credit card or digital wallet payments, COD introduces a temporal lag that allows for tactile confirmation before commitment, a form of agency that consumers increasingly valorize in high-risk, low-regulation markets. Hence, promotions that are paired with COD enjoy a dual legitimacy: one rooted in the affective seduction of price incentives, and another grounded in procedural reassurance.

Yet the mediating power of COD must be understood not simply as a psychological comfort zone but as a reconfiguration of the purchase decision-making model itself. Classical decision models assume rational actors weighing costs and benefits within a linear framework. However, digital consumptionis episodic, fragmented, and deeply embedded in aestheticized flows of content. It is within these nonlinear circuits of exposure and engagement that promotions operate, often initiating purchases that are more affect-driven than deliberativ. In such cases, the decision to repeat a purchase is shaped less by product functionality and more

by the cumulative experience of shopping its ease, speed, safety, and alignment with self-image. COD, in this architecture, plays a performative role; it not only facilitates but reaffirms the buyer's autonomy, allowing the consumer to anchor emotional gratification in procedural control. When analyzed together, promotion and COD form a dialectical loop promotion draws the buyer in, while COD closes the trust gap necessary for repetition. This interplay is not simply additive but synergistic, yielding a consumer behavior paradigm rooted in affective assurance and procedural legitimacy.

Despite the increasing scholarly attention to digital promotion, empirical gaps persist in contextualizing these mechanisms within specific socio-cultural and geographical environments. Indonesia, with its vast archipelagic dispersion, heterogeneity in digital literacy, and high mobile penetration rate, presents a fertile yet complex terrain for social commerce (Jannah et al., 2025). While studies have explored consumer trust in relation to digital interfaces, few have foregrounded the mediating role of payment mechanisms within the affective economies of social commerce platforms. Moreover, prior research often privileges metropolitan centers, leaving secondary cities such as Palu underexamined despite their growing digital consumer base. This study thus addresses a significant gap by focusing on the interrelations among promotion, COD, and repurchase interest among TikTok Shop users in Palu City. It seeks to move beyond surface correlations and instead offer a nuanced account of how trust, affect, and technological design coalesce in shaping consumer behavior in emerging digital economies.

Methods

Research Design and Analytical Framework

This study adopts a quantitative causal research design, structured to examine the directional relationships among three key variables: promotion, repurchase interest, and Cash-on-Delivery (COD) as a mediating mechanism. The central concern is not merely to describe consumer behavior but to model the pathways through which promotional efforts influence repeated purchasing within a digital platform ecosystem. This design is grounded in theory-testing logic, aligning with the need to isolate mediating and moderating effects within transactional behavior, particularly in social commerce environments such as TikTok Shop. As consumer trust, perception, and payment safety increasingly intersect with promotional influence, a causal design allows for precise identification of these mechanisms in action.

Context and Population

The research was conducted in Palu City, Indonesia, an urban site with growing but underexamined participation in digital commerce. The choice of this locale reflects the intention to extend scholarly attention beyond metropolitan centers and capture behavioral dynamics from digitally active yet underrepresented urban populations. The population targeted for this study consists of individuals who have completed at least two purchases on the TikTok Shop platform. This specific threshold was selected to ensure that all respondents had sufficient interactional exposure to both promotional content and the transactional procedures of the platform, thereby grounding their responses in actual experience rather than hypothetical intention.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Given the absence of a publicly available database identifying all TikTok Shop users in Palu, the study employed a non-probability purposive sampling approach. This method allowed the research to deliberately select participants who met the required criteria of platform familiarity

and repeat purchase history. While this approach does not facilitate broad generalizability, it strengthens internal validity by ensuring that respondents are contextually relevant and behaviorally experienced. The final sample consisted of 90 participants, a number determined using Roscoe's heuristic, which recommends a minimum of 30 observations per exogenous variable in multivariate analysis. With three core constructs in the model, the sample size meets the recommended threshold for Structural Equation Modeling using the PLS approach.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed directly to participants. The instrument was constructed using multi-item Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), adapted from prior validated measures in consumer behavior and marketing literature. Each construct promotion, COD, and repurchase interest was operationalized using reflective indicators consistent with established psychometric standards. Prior to the main data collection, the instrument was pretested and refined for clarity and contextual relevance, ensuring that all items were linguistically accessible and semantically appropriate for the local audience. Ethical procedures were strictly followed: respondents were informed of the study's academic purpose, assured anonymity, and invited to participate voluntarily.

Analytical Procedure

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software. This analytical technique was selected over covariance-based SEM due to its robustness with smaller sample sizes, ability to estimate complex models with mediating variables, and suitability for exploratory predictive analysis. The analysis proceeded in two phases: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model was evaluated for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. Convergent validity was assessed via outer loadings (threshold > 0.7) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.5), while composite reliability values exceeding 0.7 confirmed internal consistency. Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings.

The structural model was then tested to evaluate the hypothesized causal relationships among constructs. This involved estimating path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values using bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples. Hypotheses were accepted if the resulting p-values were below the conventional 0.05 threshold. The model's explanatory power was also gauged through R^2 values, reflecting the percentage of variance in repurchase intention explained by the independent and mediating variables. In addition, indirect effect analysis was carried out to test the mediating role of COD, calculating both the strength and significance of its influence in the pathway from promotion to repurchase interest.

Results and Discussion

To approach empirical findings as inert outputs would be to underestimate their generative potential. In this study, the data do not merely affirm or reject hypotheses. They function as an interpretive mirror, reflecting how trust, behavioral expectation, and marketing strategy interact within a volatile digital environment. Each statistical outcome represents more than a numerical correlation. It signals a behavioral pattern forged under conditions shaped by risk, persuasion, and the architecture of platform design. The intention here is not to isolate significance values in abstraction, but to foreground how these results contribute to an evolving conversation about the psychological mechanics of digital commerce. What follows is not a mechanical presentation of numbers, but a curated sequence of analytical entry points into the

logics of repurchase behavior as mediated by promotion and transactional safety. These findings, though derived from a localized sample, extend well beyond geography. They invite a reconsideration of how platforms, consumers, and marketing strategies co-construct trust in algorithmically saturated economies.

Respondent Characteristics

Age

Age in this study is divided into 4 categories, namely 18-25 years, 26-30 years, 31-40 years, and 40 years and above, which can be seen in the following picture:

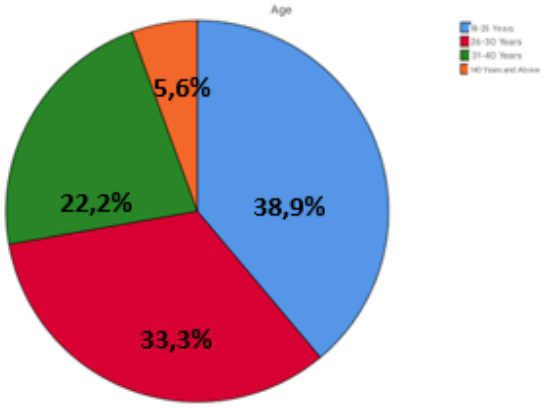

Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age

Source: SPSS output results (2025)

Based on Figure 1. most of the respondents in this study were aged 18-25 years with a total of 35 respondents with a percentage of 38.9%. This shows that most of the customers of the TikTok Shop online shopping platform are young people.

Gender

Gender in this study is divided into two categories, namely male and female, which can be seen in the following image:

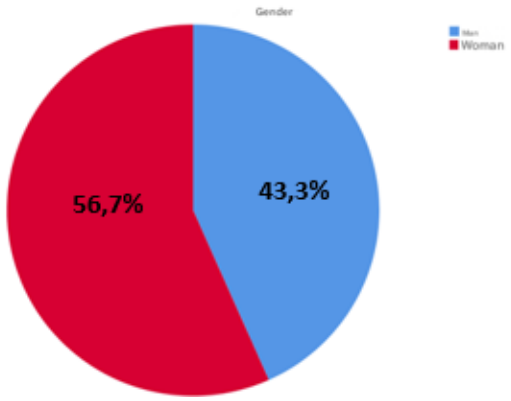

Figure 2. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Source: SPSS output results (2025)

Based on Figure 2. shows that the number of female respondents is greater than the number of male respondents, namely with a percentage of women of 56.7% with 51 respondents while men are 43.3% with 39. This shows that users of the TikTok Shop online shopping platform are used by everyone, both men and women.

Jobs

Jobs in this study are divided into 5 categories, namely Students, Self-Employed, Private Employees, Civil Servants/TNI/POLRI, and Others which can be seen in the following image:

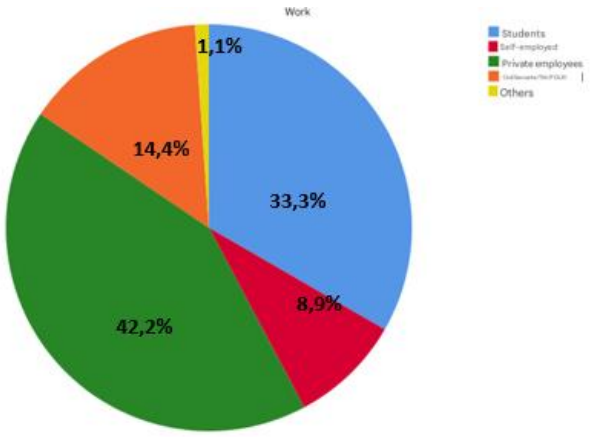

Figure 3. Distribution of Respondents Based on Occupation

Source: SPSS Output Results (2025)

Based on Figure 3. that the majority of respondents are Private Employees with a total of 38 respondents with a percentage of 42.2%, and a small portion are others with a total of 1 respondent with a percentage of 1.1%. This is because the TikTok Shop online shopping platform provides products that are in demand by young people who are working as private employees.

Income

Income in this study is divided into 5 categories, namely IDR < 1,000,000, IDR 1,000,000 - IDR 2,000,000, IDR 2,000,000 - IDR 3,000,000, IDR 3,000,000 - IDR 4,000,000, and IDR > 4,000,000 which can be seen in the following image:

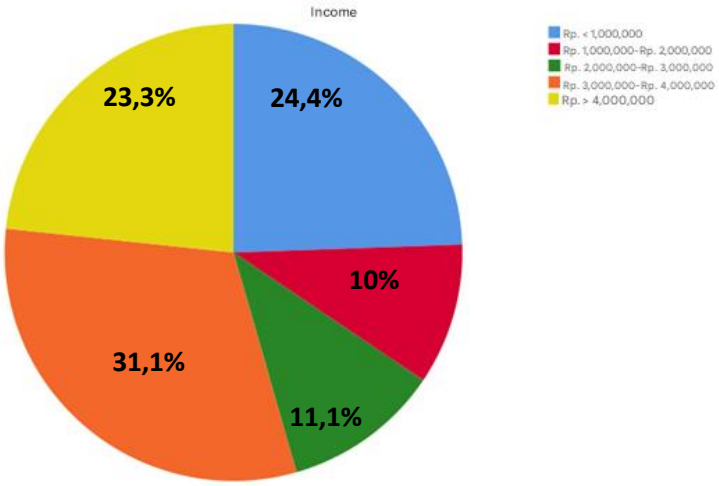

Figure 4. Distribution of Respondents Based on Income

Source: SPSS Output Results (2025)

Based on Figure 4. that the respondents in this study mostly earned Rp. 3,000,000 - Rp. 4,000,000 with the highest percentage of 31.1%, with 28 respondents and the lowest percentage was in the income of Rp. 1,000,000 - Rp. 2,000,000 of 10% with 9 respondents. This is because most of the respondents in this study already have enough income to buy a cellphone.

Outer Model Testing

PLS model evaluation is carried out in two stages, namely evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). Evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) consists of testing convergent validity and composite reliability. Convergent validity of the measurement model using reflective indicators is assessed based on the loading factor of the indicators that measure the construct. Figure 1 shows that there are three variables with a total of 17 indicators, namely 9 indicators for promotion, 3 indicators for cash on delivery and 5 indicators for purchasing decisions.

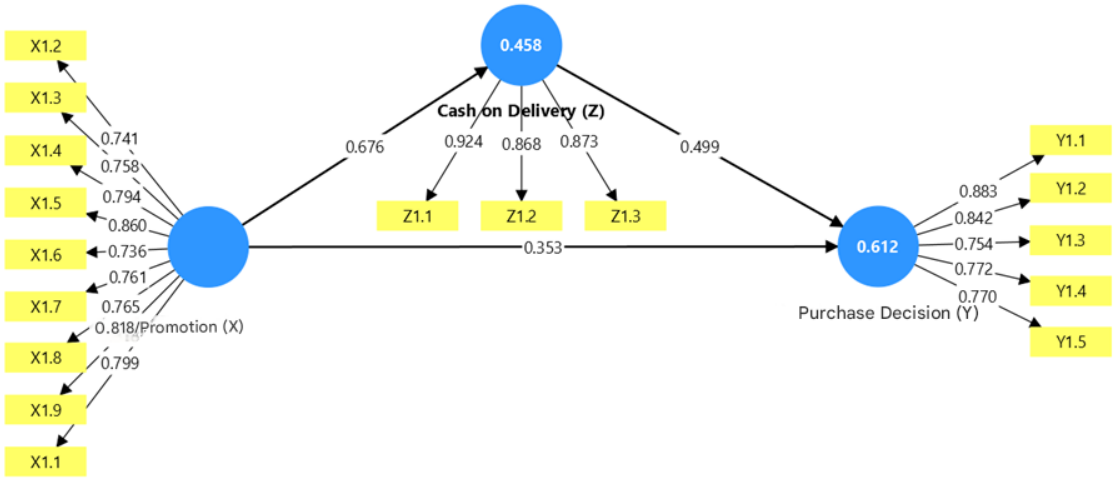

Figure 5. Outer Model

Based on the results of the measurement model test, all indicators have an outer loading of more than 0.7, AVE ≥ 0.5, namely 0.612 for the promotion construct, 0.789 for the cash on delivery construct and 0.649 for the purchasing decision construct. Construct reliability test that can be measured by composite reliability. This composite reliability assessment is carried out by looking at the output of the view latent variable coefficients. A construct is declared reliable if it shows a composite reliability value> 0.70. In this test, the composite reliability values are 0.933 for promotion, 0.901 for cash on delivery and 0.936 for purchasing decisions. These values are also greater than each correlation between constructs.

Hypothesis Testing

Inner Model

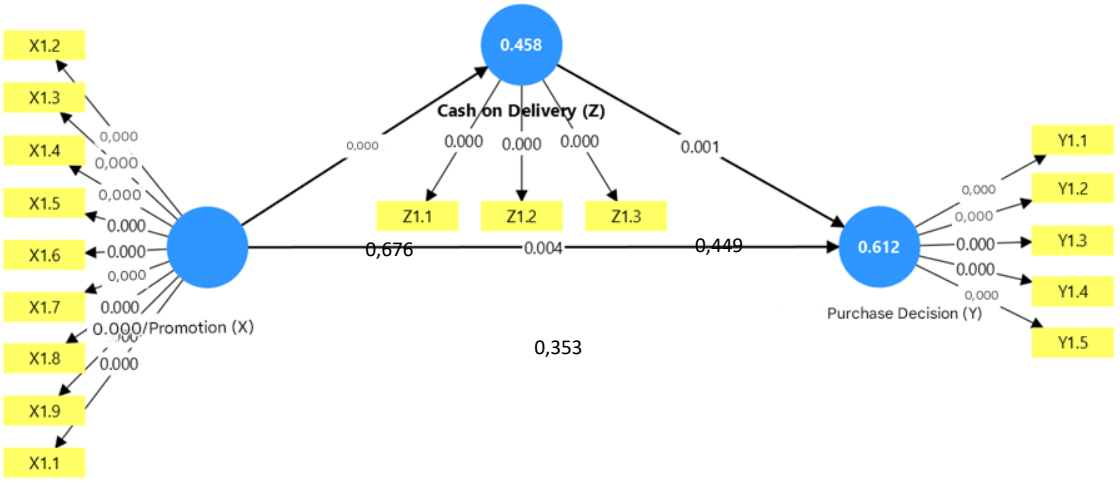

Figure 6. Inner Model

Hypothesis testing is done by looking at the p-values. The basis for decision making is if the p-value ≤ 0.05 the hypothesis is accepted, otherwise ≥ 0.05 the hypothesis is rejected. In addition to looking at the p-values, hypothesis testing can be done by looking at the t-statistic distribution value. Based on a sample of 90 respondents, the t-statistic distribution value is 1.662. Thus, a hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic value ≥ 1.662, and vice versa, a hypothesis is rejected if the t-statistic value <1.662. The summary of the path coefficient values for each hypothesis is summarized in Figure 6 and Table 1.

The promotion variable (X) has a significant effect on cash on delivery (Z) at TikTok Shop. This is proven by looking at the p-value of 0.000 <0.05 and can also be seen in the t-statistic value of 8.824> 1.662. Promotion variable (X) has a significant effect on purchasing decision (Y) on TikTok Shop. This can be proven by looking at the p-value of 0.004 <0.05 and also the t-statistic value of 2.919> 1.662.

Table 1. Hypothesis Test Results (Path Coefficients)

Hypothesis	Relationship between Constructs	*Original Sample* (O)	*T Statistics* (|O/STERR) (t)	*P-Values*	Information
H[1]	X → Z	0,676	8,824	0,000	Accepted
H[2]	X → Y	0,353	2,919	0,004	Accepted
H[3]	Z→Y	0,449	3,549	0,001	Accepted
H[4]	X→Z→Y	0,338	3,231	0,002	Accepted

Data Source: Processed Data (2025)

The cash on delivery variable (Z) has a significant effect on purchasing decision (Y) on TikTok Shop. This can be proven by looking at the p-value of 0.001 <0.05 and also the t-statistic value of 3.549> 1.662. The promotion variable (X) has a significant effect on purchasing decision (Y) mediated by cash on delivery (Z) on TikTok Shop. This is proven by looking at the p-value of 0.002 <0.05 and also the t-statistic value of 3.231> 1.662.

Causal Relationships in the TikTok Shop Ecosystem

The relationship between promotional strategies and the prevalence of Cash-on-Delivery (COD) as a preferred payment method cannot be reduced to a functional convenience, for it is deeply embedded in consumer psychology, digital trust economies, and platform design. In digital commerce environments where asymmetric information and perceived risk remain high, promotional offers serve not only as economic incentives but as relational overtures. These offers promise more than discounts; they promise reliability, legitimacy, and a willingness to negotiate consumer skepticism. However, the efficacy of such promotions is not interpreted uniformly across all transactional contexts. Multiple recent studies have documented that promotions in isolation may provoke suspicion rather than interest if not accompanied by assurances of post-purchase security (Kasabov, 2015; Kumar et al., 2025; Grieco, 2024). This is especially relevant in the Indonesian context, where cultural preferences for tactile, post-transaction validation still dominate, and where promotional signaling is often evaluated through a relational rather than rational lens (Yang et al., 2024; Boyd et al., 2022). COD, in this framework, does more than reduce friction; it constitutes a symbolic response to consumer hesitation, aligning itself with the emotional calculus of safety and the structural necessity of transactional accountability (Faust, 2024; Illouz, 2017). Studies by Pellegrino (2024) have observed that COD mechanisms directly enhance the credibility of promotional campaigns by offering temporal deferral, which resonates with consumers who are otherwise cautious or constrained by prior negative digital experiences.

This finding suggests that the significant relationship between promotion and COD is not mechanistic but deeply contingent on the mediating variables of trust, platform familiarity, and

contextual risk interpretation. COD effectively becomes the institutional reassurance that allows promotional communication to become meaningful, especially for younger or first-time digital buyers in urban second-tier cities (Luo, 2022; Li, 2016). The role of platform design in facilitating this trust-building cannot be overlooked. When promotions are algorithmically amplified without parallel assurances in payment security, studies show a significant drop in click-through-to-conversion rates. Inversely, when promotional appeals are delivered with COD as a built-in transaction mechanism, conversion rates improve and trust becomes internalized as part of the buyer-platform relationship. Consumers interpret such arrangements not just as commercial but as relational cues, a finding echoed in the behavioral frameworks of Thompson (1997), who note that trust scaffolding intensifies the receptivity of promotional triggers. Hence, in the TikTok Shop context, the causal effect of promotion on COD use reflects not a linear persuasion model but a layered structure of reassurance, co-constructed by platform features, social proof, and culturally inflected consumer expectations.

Turning to the direct influence of promotions on repurchase interest, the empirical data suggest that although promotions can serve as strong initial stimuli, their long-term efficacy lies in the continuity of perceived value and psychological satisfaction beyond the first transaction. This confirms findings by Dong et al. (2011) and Swaminathan et al. (2008), who argue that promotions serve a dual role: acquisition and retention. However, these two outcomes are not necessarily aligned. Many promotional strategies excel in triggering first-time purchases but fail to convert those engagements into repeated behavior when expectations are not met or if the value proposition proves non-recurring (Becker & Arnold, 2010). This misalignment is particularly acute in social commerce environments where the promotional stimuli are embedded in ephemeral content and algorithmic volatility. In such contexts, consumers are more susceptible to impulse decision-making but also more prone to regret and disengagement unless structural reinforcements such as COD or platform loyalty features are present (Roy, 2025). As observed by Ha et al. (2010), repeated exposure to promotional content without a corresponding reinforcement in user satisfaction creates diminishing psychological returns, ultimately weakening repurchase interest.

That said, when promotions are strategically combined with emotionally salient messaging, influencer credibility, and low-friction payment options, they can stimulate not only behavioral intention but also platform loyalty. TikTok Shop, with its performative and immersive interface, is particularly effective in creating this affective-commercial hybrid, yet its strength becomes sustainable only when operational trust aligns with promotional expectations (Crittenden et al., 2011; Ayu et al., 2016; Agu et al., 2024). This alignment is where COD becomes structurally critical, bridging the emotional promise of the promotional message with the behavioral logic of post-payment satisfaction. Such findings are reinforced by Del Vecchio (2001), whose experimental work on transaction friction reduction confirms that payment deferral mechanisms enhance promotion effectiveness by providing an anchor for post-exposure rationalization. The capacity of promotions to influence repurchase interest is thus not merely a matter of frequency or discount depth but the structural credibility of the entire purchase journey. When the consumer perceives the promotion as trustworthy and low-risk, and this perception is reinforced through secure payment options, the probability of repurchase increases significantly, as also confirmed by Sanchez-Loor & Chang (2023).

Lastly, the mediating role of COD in the relationship between promotion and repurchase interest reveals a nuanced architecture of consumer reasoning. The presence of COD alters the cognitive appraisal of the promotion, transforming it from an ephemeral marketing tactic to a psychologically grounded transaction pathway. COD acts as a risk regulator that transforms tentative interest into actual behavior by minimizing the commitment burden at the point of decision-making (Sulastri, 2025; Webster, 2021; Halaweh, 2018). More critically, COD

enhances the symbolic reliability of promotions, offering consumers a sense of post-purchase agency that digital transactions typically erode. This finding aligns with the work of Islam (2024), who highlight how the timing of payment relative to product delivery affects trust perception and long-term platform engagement. Mediated pathways like these reveal that trust and security are not external to promotional effectiveness; they are constitutive of it. The interaction between promotional salience and COD assurance creates a psychologically fortified experience, increasing not just the likelihood of initial purchase but also the willingness to re-engage under similar conditions. The structural implication is clear: promotional strategies without secure transactional ecosystems are limited in their impact, and platforms that treat payment security as an afterthought risk undermining their most persuasive marketing tactics.

Behavioral, Practical, and Theoretical Implications for Social Commerce Strategy

Understanding the layered behavioral logic behind promotional effectiveness and its entanglement with payment security mechanisms offers more than descriptive insight; it demands a strategic reframing of how social commerce platforms are designed, deployed, and optimized. In environments such as TikTok Shop, where user behavior is shaped less by rational deliberation and more by emotional immediacy, platform designers must attend to the affective choreography of the shopping experience. Behavioral data suggest that promotional stimuli are most impactful not when they stand alone, but when embedded within a broader experiential narrative that includes perceived safety, convenience, and post-purchase control. The COD mechanism, by virtue of its tangible alignment with consumer anxiety mitigation, must be seen as part of this behavioral ecosystem, not as a mere payment choice. Consumers are not passive price-takers; they are risk-calculators whose preferences are constructed in situ, shaped by prior disappointments, peer influence, and the reliability of institutional cues embedded within the platform (Wang et al., 2023; Pumputis, 2024). For social commerce operators, this insight is strategic. Embedding COD not only improves conversion but reinforces promotional credibility, deepens user trust, and creates a psychologically sustainable loop of interaction.

From a practical standpoint, the integration of promotion and COD must move from being a tactical afterthought to a foundational principle of platform policy and marketing orchestration. The data affirm that COD does more than facilitate logistics; it functions as a reputational asset for platforms seeking to anchor trust in markets where digital payment culture remains unevenly developed (Aqil et al., 2022; Simatupang et al., 2023). In Indonesia's digital commerce landscape, particularly in secondary cities such as Palu, COD remains the psychological bridge between digital exposure and actual transaction. Therefore, platform strategies that emphasize aggressive discounting without simultaneously institutionalizing secure and locally resonant payment systems will likely suffer from behavioral leakage: consumers may click, scroll, and watch, but ultimately refrain from purchasing due to unresolved uncertainty. Promotional campaigns must be reframed not simply as informational outputs, but as narrative events within a trust-anchored sequence. For instance, bundling promotions with visible COD options and seller ratings could form a perceptual triad that maximizes transactional completion. TikTok Shop, and similar platforms operating in algorithmic environments, must learn to treat the behavioral moment of purchase not as a guaranteed endpoint, but as a fragile convergence of affective cues, platform assurances, and cognitive thresholds (Puengwattanapong & Leelasantitham, 2022; Gary, 2025; Zhou, 2018).

Equally important are the theoretical implications of this study, particularly for scholars interrogating the intersection of marketing communication, payment trust, and digital consumer behavior in socially embedded platforms. Existing models of consumer decision-

making, especially those rooted in classical rationality, remain ill-suited to capture the hybridized nature of social commerce transactions. Unlike traditional e-commerce, where the user intentionally seeks out a product, social commerce exposes consumers to embedded promotional stimuli through entertainment-based algorithms, reframing the decision as one of serendipitous persuasion rather than deliberate choice. Theoretical frameworks must now accommodate this complexity by integrating affective trust theory, signaling theory, and platform-mediated behavior into a singular explanatory model. COD's role, in this regard, is not peripheral but constitutive. It transforms fleeting desire triggered by promotion into enacted behavior by anchoring the transaction within a framework of delayed risk. As seen in the empirical literature (Nadler & McGuigan, 2018), trust formation in digital contexts is increasingly temporal, incremental, and experience-dependent. Theoretically, this invites a shift from static models of intention to dynamic models of relational construction, where behavior is the result of an evolving interplay between stimuli and structural assurances.

Moreover, this study's findings challenge the still-prevalent assumption that promotional success is primarily a function of content quality or frequency. The evidence here points to a deeper truth: that promotional efficacy is co-constituted by structural confidence. A promotion that is not embedded within a trustworthy infrastructure is unlikely to result in sustainable behavioral outcomes. This insight prompts theoretical revision. Marketing scholars must critically reassess the boundaries between communication and infrastructure, between persuasion and protection. In the context of platforms like TikTok Shop, the distinction is largely illusory. Every marketing message is also an infrastructural cue, and every payment option is simultaneously a communicative signal. Integrating these perspectives would allow future theory to move beyond disciplinary silos and reflect the real ecology of user behavior in hybrid social-commerce spaces (Isfahami et al., 2021). Platforms are not just selling products; they are curating environments of psychological possibility, and those environments must be structurally coherent for promotional logic to hold.

Finally, the study offers implications for policy and governance in the broader regulatory discourse on digital platforms. As social commerce continues to proliferate across Southeast Asia, regulatory bodies must recognize that the structural features of payment and promotion are not ethically neutral. Promotional saturation without protective mechanisms such as COD increases consumer vulnerability, especially among younger demographics and low-information users. Regulators must therefore consider frameworks that ensure platform accountability, requiring disclosure of payment safety features, transaction tracking, and transparent dispute resolution. A promotion offered in a context of weak buyer protection becomes a predatory act, not a persuasive one. The alignment of promotional logic with secure infrastructural affordances is not only a best practice for businesses but a necessary condition for equitable digital participation (Autio et al., 2018; Gössling, 2021; Sulastri, 2025). TikTok Shop and similar platforms must not only optimize for engagement and conversion but also take responsibility for the transactional ecosystems they are building. As the boundaries between content, commerce, and trust collapse, the future of digital markets will depend less on what is sold and more on how safely it is offered.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that the relationship between promotion and repurchase behavior in social commerce is far more layered than simple transactional reasoning would suggest. The findings underscore that promotional strategies do not act independently as isolated marketing tactics. Instead, their influence becomes meaningful when they are embedded within a broader system of psychological assurance, most notably through the use of Cash-on-Delivery as a trust

mechanism. Consumers in digitally saturated environments do not merely respond to price reductions or sales incentives. They respond to experiences that allow them to feel safe, respected, and in control. Within this context, COD serves not only as a payment method but as a behavioral stabilizer that reassures consumers their vulnerability is being acknowledged.

It has also become increasingly clear that repurchase interest does not emerge solely from satisfaction with products or engagement with content. Rather, it is constructed through a repeated encounter with structural signals of reliability. When platforms such as TikTok Shop align promotional stimuli with payment arrangements that eliminate perceived risk, they shift the consumer's evaluative framework. Purchases are no longer made in spite of doubt. They are made because doubt has been removed. The very act of returning to a platform depends on this interplay between promotional appeal and systemic security. Without that harmony, even the most compelling discounts risk becoming noise in a marketplace already overwhelmed by attention-seeking tactics.

On a conceptual level, this research encourages a rethinking of how digital marketing effectiveness is defined. Promotional communication must no longer be assessed in terms of reach or response rate alone. Its deeper value lies in its ability to generate trust over time. Trust does not emerge from content alone. It is born through experiences that align emotional intent with transactional safety. Cash-on-Delivery, often dismissed as a residual feature of low-maturity markets, should instead be seen as a strategic asset in the design of credible digital ecosystems. By allowing consumers to delay risk without disrupting convenience, it becomes an invisible infrastructure that binds the promise of promotion with the reality of consumer action.

Ultimately, the success of social commerce platforms will depend less on how creatively they market and more on how attentively they engineer trust. As user behavior becomes shaped by affective rhythms, fleeting content, and algorithmic persuasion, the margin for error in trust design narrows. Promotional strategies must be calibrated not just to spark interest but to carry the weight of commitment. Without reliable pathways for consumers to feel secure, even the most compelling messages fall short. In this evolving digital economy, the most powerful form of persuasion is not louder messaging. It is quieter assurance. And that assurance begins where promotional rhetoric ends, in the structure that makes acting on that rhetoric feel safe, rational, and human.

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