

Bridging the Rural Trust Gap in Social Commerce: Unpacking the Stimulus Organism Response Mechanism on Repurchase Intention

Yovita Adriani Hoar Bau, University of Timor, Indonesia

***Corresponding author:** author@university.ac.id

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Abstract: The proliferation of social commerce platforms like TikTok Shop has penetrated deep into rural markets, yet sustaining customer loyalty in these regions remains a critical challenge due to institutional voids and trust deficits. While initial adoption rates are high, rural consumers often exhibit low repurchase intention, and existing literature lacks a behavioral explanation for this disconnect, particularly regarding the psychological mechanism bridging digital stimuli and post-purchase loyalty. This study aims to analyze the influence of live streaming and product quality on repurchase intention, specifically examining the mediating role of consumer attitude through the lens of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. A quantitative study was conducted in Wehali Village, Indonesia, involving 108 active TikTok Shop users selected via purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. (Key Findings) The results demonstrate that live streaming interactivity and product quality significantly enhance consumer attitude. Crucially, consumer attitude fully mediates the relationship between these stimuli and repurchase intention ($\beta=0.440$, $p<0.01$). This study contributes to the literature by validating the S-O-R framework in a “hard-to-reach” rural context, proving that “attitude” serves as the critical “organism” that translates digital telepresence into behavioral response. Practically, the findings suggest that rural sellers must prioritize high-fidelity streaming and strict quality control to cultivate a positive attitude, which is the sole direct driver of sustainable repurchase behavior.

Keywords: *Live Streaming; Product Quality; Consumer Attitude; Repurchase Intention; Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R); Rural Social Commerce.*

1. Introduction

The digital economy has evolved rapidly with the emergence of social commerce, a paradigm that integrates social interaction with transactional capability. TikTok Shop has become a dominant force in this landscape, particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia, by leveraging “Shoppertainment” a blend of entertainment and commerce driven by live streaming (Chen et al., 2024). This format allows sellers to bypass traditional distribution channels and reach consumers directly. In rural areas, where access to physical retail variety is limited, social commerce offers an unprecedented “leapfrog” opportunity, connecting remote villages like Wehali in Malaka Regency to the global marketplace.

Despite the high penetration of TikTok Shop in rural Indonesia, a paradox exists: while initial adoption is robust, customer retention is fragile. A preliminary survey in Wehali Village revealed that while 88% of users have transacted on the platform, repurchase intention remains disproportionately low. This “one-and-done” behavior suggests a significant *trust gap*. Previous studies have extensively examined adoption in urban settings (Ma et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2023), yet there is a scarcity of research explaining the psychological mechanism specifically the “black box” of consumer attitude that converts a skeptical rural trialist into a loyal repeater. Furthermore, the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework to understand this rural digital behavior remains underexplored.

This study addresses these theoretical and contextual gaps by employing the S-O-R framework. We conceptualize *Live Streaming* and *Product Quality* as environmental stimuli that trigger an internal cognitive and affective state (*Consumer Attitude* the Organism), which subsequently drives the behavioral *Response* (Repurchase Intention). By unpacking this mechanism, this research offers novel insights into how “digital telepresence” can substitute for physical trust in rural communities, providing actionable strategies for sustaining growth in emerging digital markets.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theoretical Foundation

Establish This study is grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the context of online retail, this framework suggests that environmental cues (Stimuli) influence the consumer's internal state (Organism), which then dictates their approach or avoidance behavior (Response) (Zhang et al., 2024).

- Stimulus (S): The external factors presented to the consumer. In this study, we identify Live Streaming (visual, auditory, and interactive cues) and Product Quality (the physical confirmation of value) as the primary stimuli.
- Organism (O): The internal processing of these stimuli. We posit Consumer Attitude as the organism a composite of cognitive beliefs and affective feelings toward the seller.
- Response (R): The final behavioral outcome, operationalized here as Repurchase Intention.

2.2. Live Streaming and Product Quality

Live Streaming acts as a proxy for face-to-face interaction. Through real-time demonstration and immediate Q&A, it reduces the uncertainty inherent in online shopping (Widiastuti et al., 2024). High-quality live streaming creates a sense of “social presence,” making the seller appear tangible and trustworthy.

Product Quality is the fundamental baseline of commerce. In rural markets with lower disposable income, the risk of receiving a poor-quality product is a major deterrent. Quality serves as the confirmation of the promise made during the live stream.

2.3. Hypothesis Development

2.3.1. The Direct Effect on Repurchase Intention

Previous literature suggests that vivid, interactive live streams enhance the shopping experience, leading to higher retention (Ramadani, 2026). Similarly, product quality satisfaction is the strongest predictor of future loyalty (DwicaHYO, 2025).

- **H1: Live Streaming has a significant positive effect on Repurchase Intention.**
- **H2: Product Quality has a significant positive effect on Repurchase Intention.**

2.3.2. The Mediating Role of Consumer Attitude

The S-O-R framework argues that stimuli do not automatically lead to action; they must first be processed by the organism. Consumers evaluate the live stream and the product to form an *Attitude* a stable predisposition to respond favorably (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In a high-risk rural context, this attitudinal formation is critical. A positive attitude acts as a mental filter that validates the trustworthiness of the platform, thereby enabling the decision to repurchase.

- **H3: Consumer Attitude has a significant positive effect on Repurchase Intention.**
- **H4: Live Streaming has a significant positive effect on Consumer Attitude.**
- **H5: Product Quality has a significant positive effect on Consumer Attitude.**
- **H6: Consumer Attitude mediates the relationship between Live Streaming and Repurchase Intention.**
- **H7: Consumer Attitude mediates the relationship between Product Quality and Repurchase Intention.**

2.4. Conceptual Framework

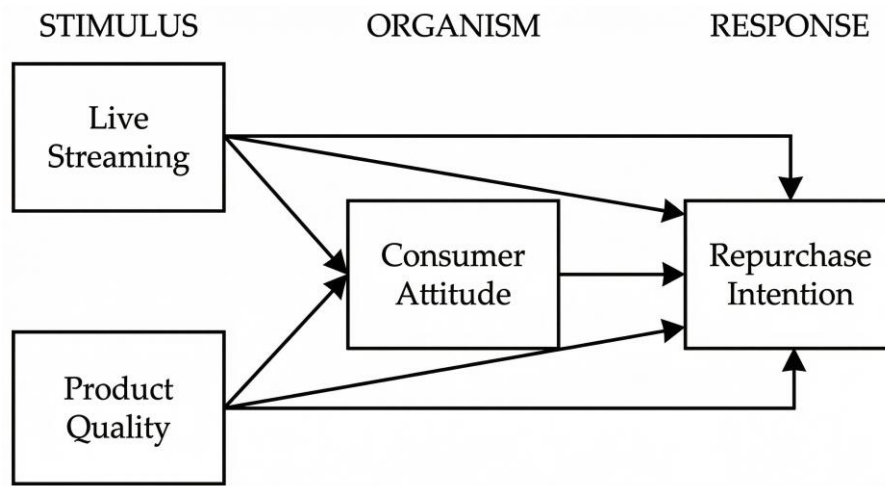


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employs an explanatory quantitative research design to test the hypothesized causal relationships. The approach is cross-sectional, capturing consumer perceptions at a single point in time.

3.2. Population and Sample

The research locus is Wehali Village, Malaka Regency, Indonesia. The population comprises TikTok Shop users who have completed at least one transaction. A sample of 108 respondents was selected using purposive sampling. *Justification:* While modest, this sample size is sufficient for the specific scope of this study. The population is highly homogenous in terms of digital behavior and socio-economic background (Hair et al., 2021). Furthermore, the sample meets the “10-times rule” for PLS-SEM analysis, ensuring statistical power > 0.80.

3.3. Data Collection and Instruments

Data were collected via an online questionnaire using a 5-point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree). The instruments were adapted from validated scales: Live Streaming (Chen et al., 2021), Product Quality (Garvin, 1987), Attitude (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010), and Repurchase Intention (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

3.4. Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis proceeded in two stages: (1) Measurement Model Assessment to verify Convergent Validity ($AVE > 0.5$), Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha & CR > 0.7), and Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker); and (2) Structural Model Assessment to test the hypotheses (Path Coefficients and t-statistics via bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Present The demographic profile shows that 62% of respondents are female, and the majority (55%) are aged 18-25 years. This reflects the “digital native” demographic driving social commerce adoption in rural Indonesia.

4.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

The assessment of the outer model confirmed that all constructs met the requirements for validity and reliability. As shown in Table 1, all Outer Loadings exceeded 0.70, Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values surpassed the 0.50 threshold.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Results

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Outer Loading</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Composite Reliability (rho_a)</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Live Streaming	LS1	0.845	0.882	0.885	0.682
	LS2	0.812			
	LS3	0.821			
Product Quality	PQ1	0.856	0.895	0.901	0.710
	PQ2	0.833			
	PQ3	0.840			
Consumer Attitude	CA1	0.871	0.865	0.870	0.695
	CA2	0.802			
Repurchase Int.	RI1	0.889	0.910	0.915	0.745
	RI2	0.854			

Source: Data Analysis (2025)

Discriminant validity was verified using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlation with any other construct.

4.3. Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model explained a substantial amount of variance, with an R-Square (R^2) of 0.624 for Repurchase Intention, indicating that 62.4% of the decision to repurchase is explained by the model. The hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results (Bootstrapping)

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Path Coeff (β)</i>	<i>T-Statistics</i>	<i>P-Values</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H1	Live Streaming -> Repurchase	0.584	3.596	0.001	Supported
H2	Product Quality -> Repurchase	0.498	3.375	0.006	Supported
H3	Cons. Attitude -> Repurchase	0.440	2.526	0.009	Supported
H4	Live Streaming -> Cons. Attitude	0.494	2.902	0.007	Supported
H5	Product Quality -> Cons. Attitude	0.454	2.663	0.008	Supported
H6	LS -> Attitude -> Repurchase	0.361	2.446	0.016	Supported
H7	PQ -> Attitude -> Repurchase	0.342	2.352	0.021	Supported

Note: Significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Data Analysis (2025)

4.4. Discussion

4.4.1. The Power of Digital Stimuli in Rural Markets

The findings strongly support the S-O-R framework. Live Streaming ($\beta=0.584$) emerged as a critical driver of repurchase intention. This suggests that for rural consumers, the interactive nature of live streaming serves as a “social presence proxy,” compensating for the lack of physical interaction (Chen et al., 2021). It reduces perceived risk and builds a bridge of familiarity. Similarly, Product Quality ($\beta=0.498$) remains a non-negotiable fundamental; without the physical confirmation of quality, the digital promise is void.

4.4.2. Attitude as the “Trust Filter” (Mediation Analysis)

The most significant contribution of this study is the confirmation of the mediating role of Consumer Attitude (H6 & H7). This implies that the path to loyalty is not a simple “stimulus-response” reflex. Rural consumers engage in a cognitive evaluation process the “Organism” phase. They must internalize the quality of the stream and the product to form a stable *Consumer Attitude* (trust and favorable feeling) before committing to a repurchase. This contradicts the notion of social commerce as purely “impulse buying”; in this context, it is a relationship-building process.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

This research confirms that sustaining repurchase intention in rural social commerce requires more than just product availability. It requires a strong S-O-R mechanism: High-quality *Live Streaming* and *Product Quality* (Stimuli) must successfully cultivate a positive *Consumer Attitude* (Organism) to trigger the decision to buy again (Response).

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This study extends the application of the S-O-R framework to the under-researched context of rural developing markets. It provides empirical evidence that “Attitude” acts as a necessary mediator, challenging direct-effect models and highlighting the complexity of rural digital consumer behavior.

5.3. Practical Implications

For practitioners and sellers on TikTok Shop, the implications are twofold:

- Invest in “Telepresence”: Live streams should not just be sales pitches but interactive sessions that build rapport to shape a positive attitude.
- Quality as Retention: Ensuring product consistency is vital. In a close-knit rural community, a negative product experience can permanently damage the collective attitude toward a seller.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is limited by its specific geographic focus (Wehali Village) and cross-sectional nature. Future research should expand to a multi-regional sample to enhance generalizability and employ longitudinal designs to track attitude stability over time.

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Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Yovita Adriani Hoar Bau: Conceptualization, Literature Review, Research Design, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Interpretation of Results, Original Draft Writing, Critical Revision, and Final Approval of Manuscript.