-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

IMPACT OF LIVE SHOPPING FEATURES ON CUSTOMERS TRUST BASED ON IT AFFORDANCE PERSPECTIVE

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─Abstract─

This research investigates the concept of guidance shopping and its influence on customer engagement, as well as its role in fostering trust within live shopping contexts. A total of 322 valid responses were gathered through an online questionnaire to evaluate the proposed model. Guidance shopping pertains to an online retail feature wherein consumers receive real-time suggestions or support to facilitate purchase decisions. The study employed a quantitative approach, utilising an online survey. SEM was implemented through SmartPLS 4.0 to examine the structural model, while SPSS was used to assess reliability, validity, and common method bias. The findings indicate that the guidance-shopping function significantly enhances customer engagement, which in turn strengthens trust by promoting interaction. The study offers strategic recommendations for live shopping platforms and vendors operating in China to

effectively bolster customer engagement and trust. Furthermore, it contributes novel perspectives to the field of live shopping by grounding the analysis in IT Affordance theory.

Keywords: Live Shopping, Technological Enablement, Customer Involvement, Customer Trust, Live Shopping Platforms

INTRODUCTION

Research Background of the Study

In recent years, the live shopping sector in China has witnessed rapid advancement, becoming a pivotal component of the e-commerce landscape. By 2023, the number of users engaging in live shopping e-commerce had reached 597 million, with the market valued at RMB 4,916.8 billion (Xu, 2024) (Wei, 2022). Several factors contribute to this growth. One key driver is the widespread adoption of smartphones and mobile Internet, which provides the necessary technological infrastructure for live shopping. According to data from the China Internet Information Center (CNNIC), there were 1.092 billion Internet users in China by the end of 2023, with 99.9% accessing the web via mobile devices (Xu, 2024). Additionally, the expansion of social media platforms, especially short-video services such as Kuaishou and TikTok, has established an extensive user base and distribution network for live shopping (Liu, 2021).

As an emerging retail format, live shopping is rapidly transforming consumer buying behaviours. It offers distinct advantages over traditional physical and online retailing. Customers increasingly seek interactive marketing, direct product exposure, and real-time engagement (Wang & Wang, 2022). Social elements embedded in live retail experiences enhance interactivity, creating a more engaging and entertaining environment (Aziz et al., 2024). Compared to conventional image-based online shopping, live shopping provides a more immersive and detailed visual representation of products, allowing consumers to better assess product features and usage (Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, the capacity to engage with live content in real time enables continuous consumer participation (Hou et al., 2020). Over time, numerous SMEs have entered the live shopping domain, leveraging the inclusivity of these platforms to market their products. Among them, TikTok has rapidly become a leading live shopping platform. Initially designed for short-form video sharing, TikTok has evolved into a significant retail medium following the integration of live shopping features (He et al., 2024). The demand for online shopping surged during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, propelling TikTok's transformation into a key sales channel for individuals and businesses alike (Bray, 2024). Through partnerships and extensive promotions, TikTok amassed a substantial user base and helped mainstream live shopping. In 2023, live shopping transactions on TikTok alone amounted to RMB 2,600 billion (Choi & Jeon,

2022).

TikTok's competitive advantage in live shopping lies in its powerful recommendation algorithms, strong interactivity, diversified content, and social dynamics. The platform accurately delivers relevant live content to users, who can then engage in real time with hosts during broadcasts, fostering a more participatory shopping experience. With a wide array of products and live content, TikTok attracts audiences with varying preferences. Users also play an active role in disseminating content by liking, commenting, and sharing, which helps drive further product exposure and sales (Bray, 2024). Currently, TikTok live shopping has surpassed 700 million users (Song, 2022), underscoring both its widespread acceptance and significant market presence.

Existing trends and scholarly investigations suggest that live shopping addresses many of the trust-related issues associated with conventional online retail. Persistent concerns such as counterfeit goods, misleading advertisements, poor after-sales service, and manipulated data have negatively impacted consumer trust and disrupted the integrity of the live shopping ecosystem (Wei, 2022). Establishing and maintaining trust is fundamental for cultivating enduring consumer relationships and enhancing product perception (Handayani & Sari, 2022). In the early phases of trust development, high perceived risk and lack of established trust can render consumer relationships fragile. As trust evolves over time, its stability becomes essential to influencing key consumer behaviours, such as dependency, purchase intentions, satisfaction, loyalty, conversion rates, and marketing effectiveness (Han & Xu, 2020). Thus, customer trust plays a crucial role in sustaining the live shopping sector's progress. Understanding the underlying mechanisms and pathways of trust formation offers practical value for businesses seeking to foster long-term engagement.

The proliferation of live-streaming technologies within this retail format is reshaping consumer habits by immersing them in a technologically enriched environment that enhances engagement (Wang et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2022). Innovations such as real-time visual and audio features, along with transparent information delivery, serve as fundamental elements in strengthening customer interaction (Sun et al., 2019). However, the implementation of advanced technologies does not inherently establish emotional bonds between consumers and retailers (Steinhoff et al., 2019). Consequently, relationship marketing becomes increasingly significant in digital contexts where direct human interaction is absent, as cultivating trust can help attract and retain customers (Islam et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2019; Taheri et al., 2024). The literature highlights that customer engagement is prioritised within live shopping and is instrumental in establishing trust (Andronie et al., 2021; Pop et al., 2023; Maidiono et al., 2025). Engaged customers are typically more inclined to favour products or services perceived as low-risk (Taheri et al., 2024; Maidiono et al., 2025). While prior research has laid a foundation for understanding live shopping, much of it focuses on traditional

platforms and emphasises purchase intentions. Few studies have comprehensively explored widely used platforms such as TikTok in relation to customer trust (Guo et al., 2021; Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022).

Research Problem

Although platforms like TikTok have experienced swift expansion and offer distinctive technological capabilities, previous research and the contextual analysis provided above have insufficiently addressed the role of features such as guidance shopping in shaping customer trust. Much of the existing literature has concentrated on purchase intentions or has remained confined to conventional platforms, resulting in a limited understanding of the psychological processes that connect customer engagement with the development of trust in live-streaming environments (Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022).

Research Objectives

1. To assess the effect of guidance shopping, conceptualised as an IT affordance, on customer engagement within live shopping platforms.
2. To explore how customer engagement contributes to the formation of customer trust in live shopping settings.
3. To analyse the mediating function of customer engagement in the relationship between guidance shopping and customer trust.

Significance of the Study

Accordingly, this study places particular emphasis on examining the influence of customer engagement and trust within the framework of TikTok live shopping, grounded in relevant theoretical perspectives. Given the relatively stable and advanced development of TikTok's live shopping ecosystem in China, this investigation focuses specifically on Chinese TikTok users to generate empirically grounded and practical insights relevant to this market. The data were processed using descriptive statistical techniques and SEM, employing SPSS 28.0 and SmartPLS 4.0.

Guidance shopping, in this context, refers to the provision of interactive, real-time support during live sessions. This encompasses tailored product suggestions, demonstrations of usage, and immediate responses to consumer queries. For instance, a host might recommend a particular gaming laptop in response to a viewer's question regarding performance or demonstrate the application of a skincare item in line with a viewer's specific concerns. In contrast to conventional e-commerce, such dynamic engagement mitigates uncertainty, improves product comprehension, and fosters greater trust. As an IT affordance, guidance shopping facilitates purposeful interaction and immediate feedback, thereby empowering consumers to make more informed and confident purchasing decisions.

The findings indicate that within TikTok's real-time shopping environment, the guidance-shopping construct within the IT affordance framework plays a significant role in enhancing customer engagement, which in turn positively influences the development of trust. This study offers actionable insights for live shopping platforms and vendors aiming to strengthen engagement and trust among their audiences. Furthermore, the results contribute to existing scholarship by reinforcing the theoretical basis and extending the discourse on customer trust, offering valuable direction for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Live Shopping Features and Consumer Experience

Numerous functionalities within live shopping, delivered through streaming technologies, play a vital role in capturing consumer attention. By presenting products in a dynamic and interactive manner—through real-time text, audio, and visual formats—live shopping offers consumers credible and transparent product information (Guo et al., 2021). When evaluated through the dimensions of authenticity, interactivity, and visibility, live shopping creates a more engaging and immersive consumer experience (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020). For instance, in Sky Cat Live Shopping, hosts (anchors) share immediate details about the physical characteristics, functionalities, and production background of items that interest viewers. This feature not only enhances product visibility but also establishes a direct, real-time communication channel between the anchor and the audience. Grounded in IT affordance theory, it is recognised that different technological settings generate distinct affordances. Within the present study, the affordances associated with real-time, on-site shopping technologies are examined as influential factors in shaping customer engagement and trust.

IT Affordance Theory

The origins of the IT affordance theory can be traced back to Gibson (1986) ecological psychology, which explores the relationship between individuals and their environments. Primarily concerned with interpreting human behavioural tendencies, this framework posits that perceptions and behaviours are shaped through the dynamic interaction between individuals and their surrounding context (Gibson, 1977; Gibson, 1986). The concept has since been extended into the domain of technology, where IT affordance theory incorporates both environmental influences and technological artefacts to interpret user interaction. It enables scholars to distinguish between technical characteristics and user-specific behaviours, thereby facilitating the extraction of meaningful insights from user-technology interactions (Leonardi, 2011; Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

IT affordance theory has gained widespread application across research in social media, e-commerce, and live shopping. It serves as a valuable framework for understanding how individuals' actions and perceptions are shaped by varying technological environments (Dong & Wang, 2018; Fang et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2019). In particular, Sun et al. (2019) identify three distinct IT affordances—visibility, meta-voicing, and guidance shopping—as especially relevant in live shopping scenarios. The expanding integration of this theoretical model across multiple fields underscores the critical need to understand the mutual influence between technological features and user behaviour.

Guidance Shopping within the Framework of IT Affordance

Among the various dimensions of IT affordance in live shopping environments, guidance-based interaction stands out as the most impactful and widely adopted. This functionality facilitates real-time communication between anchors and consumers, enabling sellers to respond promptly to queries, resolve concerns, and provide personalised product suggestions (Guo et al., 2021). Within the scope of this study, this concept refers to the immediate and individualised delivery of relevant information and services during live sessions, enhancing the overall shopping experience through responsive and interactive engagement (Sun et al., 2019). Anchors utilise both verbal and nonverbal communication techniques to offer tailored assistance that addresses customer needs and reduces hesitation in the purchasing process (Lv et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2019). Such personalisation strengthens the relational bond between consumers and anchors, as users perceive the guidance provided to be relevant and trustworthy (Lu et al., 2023; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). In addition, real-time interaction enhances the shopping journey by offering comprehensive product insights, including specifications, promotions, and suitability information (Sun et al., 2019).

Impact of Guidance Shopping on Customer Engagement

The combined influence of authenticity, visibility, and interactivity within live shopping environments significantly enhances the immediacy of the shopping experience while fostering heightened consumer engagement (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020). On TikTok, the immersive nature of live shopping and the perceived real-time presence resulting from active consumer involvement contribute further to the sense of authenticity and sharpen customer attention. When personalised recommendations align with consumers' practical expectations, their perceived utilitarian value is notably improved (Dong & Wang, 2018; Algharabat, 2018; Yim et al., 2017). Moreover, scholars have emphasised that meaningful interactions elevate both social presence and immersive quality, playing a vital role in building ongoing relationships and cultivating trust (Fang et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2019). Consumer satisfaction often leads to an emotional connection with the anchor, thereby reinforcing live shopping as an effective strategy for both sales

generation and relationship marketing (Lu et al., 2023). Following the conceptualisation by Sun et al. (2019), this study defines customer engagement as comprising both immersion and presence within the live shopping experience.

Building Trust through Customer Engagement

According to Andronie et al. (2021), relationship marketing in digitally mediated environments must begin with consumer engagement, as this initial involvement heightens customer interest and facilitates the development of trust. To address consumers' informational expectations, anchors enhance engagement by showcasing product features that align with viewers' interests through real-time video demonstrations (Guo et al., 2021). These dynamic visual presentations render products, imagery, and the overall shopping process more vivid and appealing, thereby delivering comprehensive product-related information to the audience (Sun et al., 2019). Such capabilities are particularly effective in drawing consumer attention in live settings and encouraging deeper involvement with product content (Yim et al., 2017). Moreover, anchors respond to specific viewer inquiries by offering detailed explanations, making product functionalities and operational steps clearly visible. Through live demonstrations, the product presentation closely resembles real-life usage scenarios, while customers can observe the spontaneous reactions of others within the stream. This creates a heightened sense of realism across the environment, product, anchor, and peer consumers Sun et al. (2019), which serves as a critical factor in encouraging deeper customer engagement. Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *There is a positive relationship between guidance shopping and immersion.*
H2: *There is a positive relationship between guidance shopping and presence.*

Impact of Engagement on Customer Trust in Live Shopping

Fostering customer engagement plays a vital role in simplifying and strengthening the process of relationship building with consumers. Within the realm of online retail, customer trust has consistently been regarded as a fundamental construct. However, the absence of physical interaction in virtual shopping environments poses significant challenges to establishing and maintaining trust. Scholars have therefore emphasised the need to continually investigate customer trust across various stages of the online purchasing journey (Islam et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2019; Skvarciany & Jurevičienė, 2018). In the context of this study, customer trust refers to consumers' perceptions of the TikTok live shopping platform's reliability, security, and the accuracy of product-related information (Chawla & Joshi, 2020). Conversely, a lack of trust can lead to reluctance in information sharing and purchasing behaviour, thereby impeding the platform's sustainable development (Gupta et al., 2021).

During the emotional and cognitive processes of information reception, consumers often interpret recommendations or shared knowledge from others as social validation, which can positively influence their attitudes and initiate trust formation (Taheri et al., 2024). Consistent with this perspective, trust within TikTok live shopping is developed through multiple perceptual layers, including self-assessment, anchor presentation, and peer interaction. This multidimensional engagement cultivates favourable evaluations and contributes to the progressive development of trust. Prior studies have confirmed a positive association between customer engagement and trust (Boateng, 2019; Taheri et al., 2024).

Live shopping mitigates the limitations of traditional e-commerce by fostering trust through enhanced sensory engagement and perceived co-presence (Komiak & Benbasat, 2004). Its visual transparency allows customers to observe products in real time, thus increasing attention and confidence in purchase decisions (Zhang et al., 2021). Interactive functions, such as comment sections and tailored recommendations, intensify engagement and foster a sense of closeness between consumers and sellers, reinforcing trust (Sun et al., 2019; Taheri et al., 2024). The perception of presence is particularly significant, as anchors often interact with viewers in a friendly, familiar tone, thereby deepening relational bonds and strengthening trust (Zhang et al., 2021). The delivery of real-time information and genuine interactions simulates in-store experiences, enhancing both transparency and perceived realism (Chen & Shen, 2015; El Amri & Akrout, 2020; Kong et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2019).

In the conceptual model depicted in Figure 1, immersion reflects the user's focused involvement during live shopping, creating a deeply attentive experience. Presence captures the psychological sensation of being situated within the virtual retail space, intensifying the perception of authenticity and interpersonal connection. Together, immersion and presence serve as foundational elements that influence engagement and trust by replicating aspects of physical retail encounters. In live shopping scenarios, consumers who are highly engaged and feel immersed are more inclined to trust the seller and establish enduring relationships (Taheri et al., 2024). Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: *There is a positive relationship between immersion and customer trust.*
H4: *There is a positive relationship between presence and customer trust.*

Literature Gap

Although live shopping's interactive components and their influence on consumer behaviour have been widely studied, existing research primarily centres on broader e-commerce settings or generalised purchase intentions. There remains insufficient investigation into how particular IT affordances, especially guidance shopping, shape

the development of customer trust via the pathway of customer engagement. Moreover, despite TikTok's emergence as a prominent force in the live shopping landscape, limited empirical work has addressed its effectiveness in cultivating trust through synchronous interaction. Consequently, a significant gap persists in understanding how technologically mediated features generate trust, particularly within immersive and socially rich environments like TikTok live shopping.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study, developed through the integration of IT affordance theory and customer engagement theory. The model posits that Guidance Shopping, identified as a central technological component within the IT Affordance framework, exerts a positive influence on two key facets of Customer Engagement: Immersion (H1) and Presence (H2). These constructs reflect the psychological depth of user involvement and the perceived authenticity of the live shopping experience. Subsequently, both Immersion (H3) and Presence (H4) are expected to positively contribute to the formation of Customer Trust, indicating that heightened engagement mediates the link between technological affordances and trust development. This framework captures both functional and experiential elements of live shopping to explain how trust is cultivated in digital retail environments.
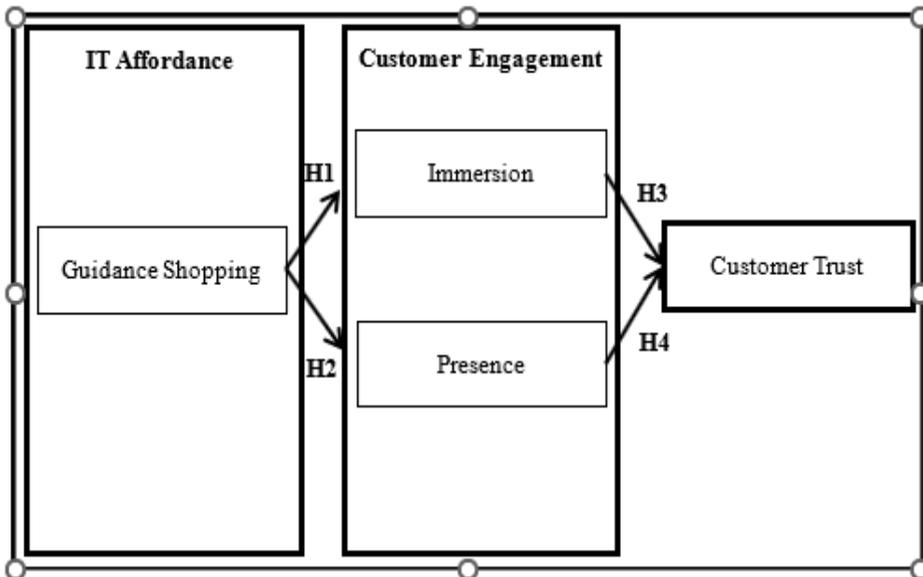

Figure 1: Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design, utilising a structured questionnaire to gather data aligned with its research objectives. The target participants were Chinese

TikTok users between the ages of 22 and 40 who had prior experience with live shopping. To ensure the relevance of the sample, purposive sampling was applied alongside screening questions to verify participant suitability. Measurement items, adapted from established literature (see Table 1), were professionally translated into Chinese to preserve linguistic accuracy and contextual clarity. The final instrument comprised ten demographic questions and four item sets corresponding to the study constructs. Each construct-related item was rated using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Sampling Technique

The study adopted purposive sampling to recruit individuals with prior experience in TikTok live shopping. Participant selection was guided by specific eligibility criteria, including being between 22 and 40 years of age and having previously engaged in live shopping activities. To confirm suitability, screening questions were incorporated at the outset of the questionnaire, ensuring that only qualified respondents proceeded. A total of 322 valid responses were obtained and included in the final analysis, ensuring the sample accurately represented users with relevant exposure to and interaction within the live shopping environment.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument consisted of structured items developed to measure four primary constructs: Guidance Shopping (GS), Immersion (IM), Presence (PR), and Customer Trust (CT). Respondents were presented with targeted questions aimed at capturing their perceptions of personalised support, levels of engagement, real-time interactivity, and trust within live shopping platforms.

Ethical Considerations

The survey followed established ethical guidelines to ensure participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were fully maintained. No personally identifiable or sensitive data were collected at any point during the study. All gathered data were used exclusively for academic purposes and were securely stored and processed. These procedures ensured that ethical integrity was upheld throughout the data collection phase.

Data Analysis

To ensure the relevance and clarity of the questionnaire, a preliminary evaluation was conducted involving academic experts, TikTok Live sellers, and experienced users of

TikTok Live shopping prior to obtaining ethical clearance. The final survey was distributed via the online platform Wenjuanxing.com, resulting in the collection of 322 valid responses for analysis. The constructs and their corresponding questionnaire items are presented in the table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire References

Constructs	Question	References
GS	GS1: Streamers on live streaming shopping can provide me with information on all alternative products I intend to buy.	Dong and Wang (2018)
	GS2: Streamers on live streaming shopping can help me establish my product needs without any restrictions.	
	GS3: Streamers on live streaming shopping can help me identify which product attributes best fit my needs.	
	GS4: Streamers on live streaming shopping can provide me with personal product customization based on my requirements.	
IM	IM1: Not deeply engrossed-Deeply engrossed.	Yim et al. (2017)
	IM2: Not absorbed-Absorbed.	
	IM3: My attention was not focused-My attention was focused.	
PR	RP1: There is a sense of human contact in live streaming shopping.	Ou et al. (2014)
	PR2: There is human warmth in live streaming shopping.	
	PR3: When watching live streaming shopping, my body was in room, but I felt my mind was inside the world created by this streamer.	
	PR4: When watching live streaming shopping, I felt I was immersed in the world this streamer had created.	
CT	CT1: I believe in the information that the streamer provides through live streaming.	Liu and Oda (2021)
	CT2: I believe that live streamer are trustworthy.	
	CT3: I do not think that live streamer would take advantage of me.	
	CT4: I believe that I will be able to use products like those demonstrated on live streaming.	

Note: Customer Trust: CT; Guidance Shopping: GS; Immersion: IM: Presence: PR.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Of the 322 valid responses, 224 were female and 98 male. Most participants (54.7%) held a bachelor's degree, with primary age groups being 22–26 and 36–40 years. Around 41% reported a monthly income of 4,000–6,999 RMB. Nearly 46% had 2–3 years of TikTok shopping experience, typically spending 30 minutes to one hour per session, with average monthly spending between 200–500 RMB. Popular purchases included home furnishings, clothing, food, and beauty products. To address potential common method bias, Harman's one-factor test was applied using SPSS 28.0, yielding a 46.365% variance—below the 50% threshold—indicating no serious bias (Hair, 1998). The reliability assessment confirmed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha

and composite reliability (CR) values exceeding 0.70. All constructs demonstrated CR values above 0.90, peaking at 0.946, which remains within the acceptable range outlined by (Hair, 1998). Convergent validity was also established, as all AVE scores surpassed the 0.50 threshold, indicating the measurement model is both statistically reliable and suitable for structural analysis. Additionally, the model showed strong convergent and discriminant validity. Following Bagozzi and Singh (1991), AVE values exceeding 0.50 confirm adequate convergent validity. In this study, AVE values ranged from 0.749 to 0.787, indicating that each construct effectively captured variance from its indicators and confirming the measurement model's reliability and validity which are presented in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
CT	0.916	0.928	0.749
GS	0.898	0.946	0.765
IM	0.902	0.917	0.772
PR	0.910	0.940	0.787

Discriminant validity was assessed using two established methods: the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT. According to the Fornell-Larcker approach, the square root of the AVE for each construct (diagonal values) exceeded the corresponding correlations with other constructs, thereby confirming that each construct captures unique variance. Additionally, HTMT values remained well below the accepted threshold, with the highest recorded value being 0.547, significantly under the 0.85 limit recommended by (Roemer et al., 2021). These findings collectively demonstrate that the constructs are conceptually distinct and that the measurement model possesses strong discriminant validity, thereby confirming the integrity of its internal structure shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Fornell-Larcker Criterion				
	CT	GS	IM	PR
CT	0.865			
GS	0.484	0.875		
IM	0.505	0.430	0.879	
PR	0.498	0.471	0.478	0.887
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)				
	CT	GS	IM	PR
CT				
GS	0.515			
IM	0.547	0.454		
PR	0.528	0.490	0.511	

Further analysis was conducted on the structural model to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. Using SmartPLS 4.0, the study calculated path coefficients, significance levels, t-values, and R² values, as illustrated in Figure 2. The initial focus was on examining the influence of IT Affordance on customer engagement. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between Guidance Shopping and Immersion ($\beta = 0.462$, $p < 0.001$), as well as between Guidance Shopping and Presence ($\beta = 0.500$, $p < 0.001$), thus providing support for H1 and H2. These results confirm that Guidance Shopping on TikTok live shopping platforms substantially enhances both psychological immersion and perceived presence in the engagement experience.
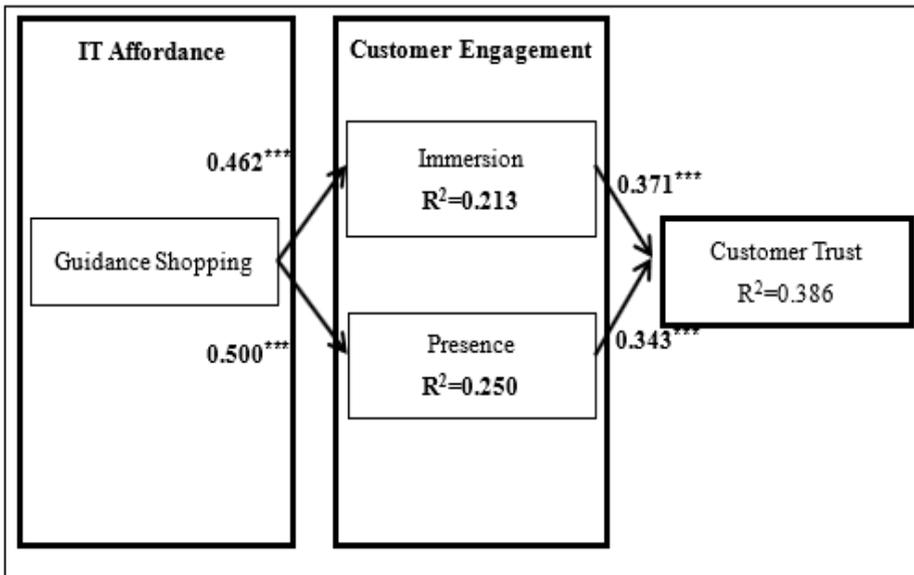
Figure 2: Model Testing Results
Note: *:** $p < 0.001$.

The analysis then assessed the impact of Customer Engagement on Customer Trust. Immersion ($\beta = 0.371$, $p < 0.001$) and Presence ($\beta = 0.343$, $p < 0.001$) both demonstrated significant positive effects on Customer Trust, confirming support for H3 and H4. As summarised in Table 4, all four hypotheses were validated by statistically significant t-values (all exceeding 5) and p-values (all equal to 0.000). These findings reinforce the critical role of Guidance Shopping in promoting immersive and engaging user experiences (H1 and H2), which, in turn, strongly influence the development of Customer Trust (H3 and H4).

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Path	Path Coefficients	Standard Deviation	T-Values	P-Values	Supported
H1	GS→IM	0.462	0.052	8.857	0.000	Yes
H2	GS→PR	0.500	0.050	9.987	0.000	Yes
H3	PR→CT	0.371	0.065	5.710	0.000	Yes
H4	IM→CT	0.343	0.066	5.201	0.000	Yes

DISCUSSION

This study adopts IT affordance theory as its foundational framework to explore the influence of live shopping features on customer engagement and their subsequent effect on customer trust within a live shopping environment. Four hypotheses were proposed and all received empirical support, as evidenced by statistically significant path coefficients. These findings indicate that the technological functionalities inherent in live shopping environments, comparable to those of online retail interfaces, effectively deepen users' psychological immersion and perceived presence—mechanisms that contribute to the establishment of customer trust.

The results affirm that live shopping features directly enhance customer engagement, aligning with prior research in this domain (Joo & Yang, 2023; Sun et al., 2019; Lin & Huang, 2024). For instance, Sun et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of anchors delivering personalised product information tailored to viewer needs, which TikTok live shopping platforms have operationalised through real-time Q\&A interactions. Similarly, Shao et al. (2020) posited that guided interactions through anchors facilitate immersive consumer experiences, while Choi and Jeon (2022) emphasised the role of high interactivity in intensifying user immersion by enabling real-time discussion and feedback. Shao et al. (2020) further argued that personalisation functions as an interactive mechanism that enhances both immersion and engagement by addressing customer queries. However, Lu (2023) raised concerns regarding the match between the anchor and the product or brand, suggesting that mismatches may lead to scepticism and diminished immersion. They also cautioned that excessive or irrelevant interactions could result in consumer fatigue or confusion, underscoring the importance of moderation. Despite differing research contexts, these studies offer complementary insights.

Conversely, the findings of Saffanah et al. (2023), which utilised a qualitative methodology focused on traditional e-commerce websites, diverge from those of the present study. Their research did not identify a significant relationship between guided shopping and immersion. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in methodological approach, platform characteristics, and user preferences. Unlike

traditional online shopping, which lacks real-time engagement, TikTok caters to users who value interactive and dynamic experiences. Moreover, variations in product categories and demographic profiles may also contribute to differing outcomes.

Existing literature consistently identifies customer engagement as a foundational condition for cultivating trust (Taheri et al., 2024). This study supports that view, revealing a positive association between customer engagement and trust, which aligns with the findings of Boateng (2019) and Taheri et al. (2024), where highly engaged consumers demonstrate stronger trust in platforms, anchors, or products. Similar conclusions were drawn by Hasan and Gupta (2020), who argued that enhanced engagement increases platform usage and subsequently reinforces trust. By leveraging live shopping platforms effectively, merchants can adopt strategic approaches to product presentation and customer interaction that facilitate a clearer understanding of the product or message. In future marketing efforts, especially during new product launches, brands may employ tailored strategies to attract consumer interest, thereby promoting stronger and more stable trust-based customer relationships.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Grounded in the framework of IT affordance theory, this research investigates how the affordance of guidance shopping influences the development of customer trust, uncovering the multilayered pathways through which TikTok's live shopping technological attributes shape psychological experiences and contribute to trust formation. The study contributes both theoretically and practically by demonstrating that technological features can be converted into trust capital via users' psychological engagement, thereby extending the explanatory scope of affordance theory within the context of social e-commerce.

Departing from earlier studies that predominantly emphasised the direct impact of IT affordances on purchase behaviour, this research shifts focus to the psychological mechanisms underpinning trust development. It addresses a notable theoretical gap by illustrating how technology-induced experiences facilitate trust construction in live e-commerce environments. Notably, this is the first study to integrate IT affordance theory with customer engagement theory to examine how guidance shopping influences trust indirectly through the mediating effects of immersion and presence. This integration offers a novel lens to understand emotional transfer mechanisms within human-computer interaction settings.

The outcomes also present practical implications for refining the technical design of live shopping platforms. Enhancing the instructional components of guidance shopping can improve users' sense of presence, which may be further strengthened through more responsive and precise interaction design. Furthermore, as immersion and presence are

identified as pivotal mediators in the trust-building process, platform developers and merchants should prioritise creating rich, multi-dimensional broadcast environments and fostering authentic emotional expression by anchors to elevate users' immersive experiences.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

While the study offers valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The investigation is confined to TikTok, which, although currently the most mature live shopping platform in China, does not represent the full spectrum of emerging platforms adopting live broadcasting features. Future research could expand the scope by including newly transitioned platforms, thereby broadening the applicability and depth of the findings. Moreover, examining variables such as product categories or specific live streaming formats may yield a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms that shape customer engagement and trust development. Expanding the geographic focus of the research could also provide comparative insights across different consumer markets. Additionally, incorporating control or mediating variables in future studies may offer a more detailed perspective on the pathways through which customer trust is established and sustained.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes with strong empirical support for all proposed hypotheses, thereby contributing meaningfully to the advancement of live shopping research within the Chinese context and extending the applicability of IT affordance theory in this domain. The findings confirm that IT affordances in live shopping environments significantly enhance customer engagement, which, in turn, plays a critical role in fostering customer trust. Beyond theoretical implications, the study offers practical recommendations aimed at guiding the sustainable evolution of China's live shopping ecosystem. As one of the fastest-growing forms of e-commerce in the country, live shopping continues to attract considerable interest from brands and merchants, including a substantial number of SMEs and individual sellers. The development and refinement of platform architecture and live streaming formats are essential to elevating the customer experience. The results indicate that Chinese consumers are becoming increasingly sophisticated, forming independent judgements and recognising emerging norms within e-commerce. Nonetheless, innovative marketing strategies retain the potential to re-engage consumer interest.

Contemporary consumers expect sellers to actively interact while presenting products through visual formats and real-time communication tools. They value transparency and responsive service, particularly in environments that facilitate meaningful engagement. Settings characterised by frequent, relevant communication and high involvement are

more conducive to building trust. When customers become absorbed in product demonstrations, anchor explanations, and interactive sessions, it deepens the connection between buyer and seller. This form of quality interaction not only strengthens trust but also addresses concerns related to product uncertainty, ultimately enhancing the consumer's overall live shopping experience.

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