PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY: TIKTOK LIVE SHOPPING HOSTS IN PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the meaning, motives, and experiences of TikTok live shopping hosts in applying persuasive communication through Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach. The results show that hosts have meaning in facilitating trust, building credibility, and transforming symbols of persuasive communication. Host motives are divided into "because of" motives rooted in background, and "in order to" motives oriented toward future goals. The hosts' experiences include understanding the flow of activities, using verbal and non-verbal symbols, and effective time management in live shopping. The integration of social and technological aspects proves that live shopping builds a comprehensive digital shopping experience and that the hosts' persuasive communication is the main foundation that transforms the audience's doubts into trust. Thus, this study provides theoretical contributions to the study of digital communication and practical contributions to the development of e-commerce through live shopping.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Persuasive Communication, Live Shopping.

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has given rise to a new form of marketing through the phenomenon of live shopping on social media, where hosts play a key role in creating an interactive shopping experience. Unlike conventional e-commerce, live shopping combines real-time product demonstrations with two-way communication, allowing hosts to use various persuasive communication techniques that can create closeness with the audience (Chen et al., 2023). This shows the transformation from mere digital transactions to a social experience oriented towards interaction. The development of live shopping is highly relevant to the rapid growth of e-commerce in Indonesia. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Trade (2024) projects that users in Indonesia will reach 73.06 million in 2025 and will increase to 99.1 million by 2029. One of the driving platforms is TikTok, a social media platform that has expanded into the realm of e-commerce called TikTok Shop, which utilizes live shopping as one of its main features (Zulkarnaen & Hermawan, 2025). Indonesia is even listed as the world's second-largest market for TikTok Shop, with transactions reaching US$6.198 billion in 2024 (Zhang et al., 2024). This fact shows how live shopping has become a major trend in the digital shopping behavior of Indonesians.

The success of live shopping is not only determined by technology, but also supported by the host's skills in communicating with the audience. The host acts as a persuasive communicator who not only conveys product information, but also builds credibility, provides spontaneous answers, and presents a professional appearance (Warsito et al., 2024). Referring to Carl Hovland's theory of persuasive communication, the process of changing audience attitudes occurs through attention, understanding, acceptance, and ultimately influencing purchasing decisions (Mirawati, 2021). Therefore, the host becomes the communicator who determines the effectiveness of live shopping. The social and technological dimensions of live shopping complement each other in creating an effective digital shopping experience. From a social perspective, real-time interaction between the host and the audience provides an interactive communication space, where comments, questions, and testimonials from viewers can directly influence the purchasing decisions of other audiences (Bao et al., 2016). The emotional bond built through interpersonal communication strengthens trust and loyalty to the brand (Chairunisa & Azwar, 2025). At the same time, technological features such as interactive design and visuals accelerate transactions and strengthen audience engagement (Tantria & Mardayanti, 2025). According to (Azwar et al., 2023), Public spaces can be created in the

real world or in virtual spaces. The combination of social and technological aspects makes persuasive host communication more effective in encouraging purchasing decisions.

Live shopping has become an important part of e-commerce practices. Therefore, this study focuses on the host's experience in applying persuasive communication during live shopping through a phenomenological approach. The purpose of this study is to understand the meaning of being a TikTok live shopping host, explore the host's motives, and analyze the host's experience in applying persuasive communication. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to communication studies in the digital era, as well as practical contributions that are useful for e-commerce industry players, particularly in the field of live shopping.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses qualitative research, which is an approach used to understand and explore the meaning given by an individual or group to a social or humanitarian issue (Creswell, 2014). The approach used is Alfred Schutz's phenomenology, which explains that each reality is formed because of the meaning given to the same experiences shared by each person or individual. These experiences are motivated by motives that drive individuals to behave in certain ways (Nindito, 2015). The data collection techniques used in this study were literature review and interviews. The literature review was conducted on phenomenological studies related to persuasive communication and live shopping. The researcher also conducted interviews with predetermined informants. The informants in this study were TikTok live shopping hosts.

Table 1. Informant Criteria

No.	Informant Criteria
1.	Have an Operational Understanding of the Live Commerce Industry.
2.	Have experience in using TikTok Live Shopping >3 months
3.	Have experience hosting >500 viewers in one session.
4.	Have experience as a host with GMV per session > Rp. 5,000,000
5.	Have an understanding of the role of a Tiktok Live Shopping Host

Table 2. Daftar Informan

No	List of Informant	Profession	Profile
1.	NM	*Host Live Shopping* TikTok	- Age: 20 - Gender: Girl - Experience :>6 months - Total *viewers*: 1500 - GMV per session : Rp. 10.000.000
2.	MR	*Host Live Shopping* TikTok	- Age: 25 - Gender: Boy - Experince: >3 months - Total *viewers*: 2000 - GMV per session: Rp. 15.000.000
3.	AP	*Host Live Shopping* TikTok	- Age: 21 - Gender: Girl - Experience: > 6 months - Total *viewers*: 1000 - GMV per session: Rp.9.500.000
4.	MRA	*Host Live Shopping* TikTok	- Age: 21 - Gender: Boy - Eperience: > 5 months - Total *viewers*: 900 - GMV per session: Rp.7.500.000
5.	AMD	*Host Live Shopping* TikTok	- Age: 21 - Gender: Perempuan - Eperience: >2 years - Total *viewers*: 2000 - GMV per session : Rp. 21.000.000

Source: Processed by Researchers

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of TikTok Live Shopping Hosts in Persuasive Communication

The host profession plays an important role in providing a sense of security for the audience. The live shopping feature is used by sellers to attract the audience's interest in buying, making it easier for sellers and potential audiences to communicate, especially regarding what the audience offers and the quality, size, and materials in detail so that the audience can receive high-quality products (Juliana, 2023). From their understanding of the product and their hosting style, this is where a sense of security is created for the audience. In addition, the host finds meaning as a facilitator who is able to build audience trust. According to (Bao et al., 2016), From a social subsystem perspective, live shopping can promote the flow of information and emotions, effectively reducing the risks perceived by the audience, thereby increasing audience trust.

Being a host also comes with one important meaning, which is building credibility. According to (Clarisa & Azwar, 2024) Branding is one of the fastest and most effective strategies for improving a company's image. Audiences will be more easily convinced if the host has a positive image and consistent branding. From the formation of image, a reputation emerges that makes the audience believe in the authenticity of the product and the host's intentions. "If our reputation is good, the viewers will stay," said informant 1. Thus, the host is not only an individual who guides sales, but also a public figure whose credibility influences the audience's perception. The host facilitates a shift from one-way communication to a more dynamic interactive dialogue. In live shopping, the audience acts as message recipients, namely TikTok users who actively respond to messages by leaving comments, asking questions, or making direct purchases (Wahyuni & Trijayanto, 2025). Through an interactive style, the host establishes an effective communication model tailored to the audience's needs. This is in line with (Sifa Yusnita & Gusrianisa, 2025) which states that effective communication itself is the main foundation in supporting optimal performance and delivery of public services. Thus, the host becomes a transformative symbol of persuasive communication.

The Motive of Live Shopping Hosts on TikTok in Persuasive Communication

According to (Iskandar & Jacky, 2015) The motives in phenomenological theory refer to the reasons why a person does something. In Alfred Schutz's theory, there are two types of motives, namely "in order to" motives (goal motives) and "because of" motives (cause motives). Goal motives refer to prospective reasons or future orientation, namely what a person wants to achieve through their actions. Meanwhile, the "because of" motive explains retrospective reasons or backgrounds that drive a person to act based on their past experiences and conditions. On live shopping hosts, the motive is because they enjoy communicating. As stated by informant 5, "Personally, I really like and enjoy communicating with people." This motive shows that a person's innate character can be an important factor underlying their choice of profession. In addition, this motive stems from education or experience in marketing with a knowledge base in sales strategies, branding, and consumer behavior. "I used to be a marketer for events at this brand, then I became a live host," said informant 4. This statement illustrates that the because of motive is closely related to experience and conditions that precede an understanding of live shopping. Meanwhile, the "in order to" motive of hosts can be seen from their desire to earn income through this job. Hosts take advantage of live shopping opportunities as a source of income, both from sales commissions and collaborations with brands to achieve future economic goals, as explained by informant 2, "I do live shopping for work, namely to collaborate with brands." Not only that, this motive also stems from an effort to create emotional closeness with the audience. "When I'm live, people even ask in the comments when I'll be live again because they already feel close to me," said informant 3. Hosts are oriented towards long-term relationships so that audiences will come back. This motive focuses on the concrete benefits to be gained through the profession.

Live Host Experience in Persuasive Communication

In the experience of being a host, technical training related to the product is required before going live with the host by the brand. This is important for the host, as stated Siagian et al., (2020) The host's abilities, combined with product knowledge, affect the performance of the sales team. After gaining an understanding of the product, the host then conducts live activities, paying attention to elements such as delivery and consistency of the message to be conveyed. At the end of the live session, the brand reviews the host's performance. "Our evaluation indicators include Gross Merchandise Value (GMV), number of comments, Click Through Rate (CTR), broadcast duration, and observations during the live session," said informant 3. This shows the importance of reflection in communication quality. According to Buhmann & Likely (2018) , Evaluation is the foundation of successful communication. The combination of verbal and nonverbal symbols in live shopping naturally leads to persuasive

communication. These two symbols of communication complement each other to create a deeper understanding between the sender and receiver of the message (Aswarudiin & Halawa, 2025) . In verbal communication, live shopping hosts also pay attention to choosing polite and friendly phrases. According to informant 4, "We have our own way of enticing potential customers with words." The choice of words used has a significant impact on how the audience perceives and responds to the information conveyed (Dvir Nim et al., 2023). In terms of nonverbal elements, voice intonation and expression play an important role in live presentations. Good intonation can attract the audience's attention and increase their interest and desire to buy (Li & Wang, 2023). As informant 1 said, "expressions are really important if you want to attract an audience." Sincere expressions also build audience trust in the promoted product. In addition, visual components, as described by informant 5, "on Valentine's Day, we have a pink dress code, and the host is usually cute, which makes you want to check out." This quote explains how certain themes combined with visuals can increase audience appeal. According to Syariah et al. (2022), Visualization is the main key so that soft selling techniques can function optimally. On the other hand, in the host's experience, time management is about adjusting the timing of audience interactions. "Live hosts must know when to push sales and when to chat first. But they still have to be able to maintain the flow of conversation," according to source 5. To keep the broadcast from becoming boring, hosts must also be able to keep the broadcast running smoothly. Good time management prioritizes developing plans and using the available time as efficiently as possible. (Panguriseng & Nur, 2014.) The key skill in creating powerful and persuasive moments is the timing that can be achieved.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that TikTok live shopping hosts play a central role in creating interactive shopping experiences through persuasive communication. Hosts not only serve as conveyors of product information, but also as facilitators of trust and builders of credibility in the eyes of the audience. Not only that, meaning is found through the credibility of the host and the transformative symbols of persuasive communication. The host's motives are divided into "because of" motives, such as a love of communication and educational background, and "in order to" motives, such as earning an income and building emotional relationships to create audience loyalty. The host's experience demonstrates an understanding of the flow of live shopping and its elements, such as verbal and nonverbal communication symbols, as well as time management in maintaining the quality of interaction. Thus, the integration of social and technological aspects in the host's persuasive communication is a key factor in the success of live shopping in increasing audience trust.

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