

Language Strategies in Influencer Content: Building Trust and Buyer Decisions

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how language strategies used by influencers in TikTok live streams can build consumer trust and influence purchasing decisions. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing data obtained through observation and documentation of TikTok live activities used as a product promotion medium. The results show that influencers use various language strategies in the product marketing process, including persuasive language, sharing personal experiences, using social proof, and reducing purchase risk. The persuasive strategy is most often seen in expressions that encourage the audience to buy immediately, such as emphasizing limited-time promotions or product stock availability. In addition, personal experiences shared by influencers and information about high consumer interest in products also help boost potential buyers' trust. This research finding shows that using effective language strategies on TikTok Live can be a means of communication that strengthens consumer trust while also encouraging purchase decisions.

Keywords: *Language, Influencer, Trust, Decision, Buyer.*

INTRODUCTION

The growth of social media in the digital era has changed how people communicate, look for information, and carry out daily activities. Social media platforms now play a central role in how people get information, interact, and express themselves quickly and freely. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook also make spreading information more practical because it can happen anytime and anywhere, without being limited by distance or time.

The history of social media is closely tied to the development of the internet and digital communication technology. The beginning of digital communication can be traced back to Samuel Morse's invention of the telegraph in 1844, which allowed messages to be sent over long distances much faster. As technology advanced, various means of communication emerged, such as email, Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), online discussion forums, and increasingly sophisticated internet networks. These innovations eventually

laid the foundation for modern social media, which people around the world now use to communicate, share information, and build social connections online.

According to Aminudin et al (2025), the development of social media in the digital era is no longer just about providing a space to consume information; it has created an interactive, personalized, participatory, and global communication ecosystem. Interactivity is the main feature: users don't just receive content but actively produce, share, and comment on information. This makes social media an open dialogue arena where the audience acts as communication players, not just passive receivers. In addition, the personalization brought by platform algorithms like Instagram or TikTok makes the user experience even more unique. The content shown is tailored to the user's preferences, interests, and behaviour, so every individual feels social media is a space relevant to their personal needs. This personalization strengthens the emotional connection between users and the platform, while also increasing the frequency of use. Participation has also become an important aspect. Audiences now play a dual role as both producers and consumers (prosumers). They not only consume content but also create trends, influence public opinion, and even build digital communities. This dual role shows how social media has democratized information production, where everyone has the chance to become a creator.

Influencer marketing is a digital marketing strategy that uses individuals with influence on social media to introduce, recommend, and build trust for a product or service. Influencers are considered capable of affecting opinions and purchasing decisions because they have a close relationship with their followers on social media. This study explains that the growth of social media has made promotion not just something companies do, but also something done through digital personalities that the audience trusts. Additionally, this study relates to the theory of persuasive communication. Persuasive communication theory explains that language and messages delivered in an engaging way can influence a person's attitudes and behaviour. Influencers use relaxed, emotional, and convincing words to get the audience interested in trying the products they promote. (Wirapraja, Hariyanti, and Aribowo 2023).

Informal language style in digital content has a big impact on creating communication that is more engaging, relaxed, and easy for the audience to understand. This study explains that using everyday language in digital media, especially on YouTube content, can make messages feel closer to people's daily lives. Informal language is marked by simple vocabulary, non-standard sentences, humour, and expressive phrases, making the audience feel more comfortable when receiving information. An informal language style can build an emotional closeness between content creators and the audience. Using casual language makes communication feel more natural compared to overly formal language. On social media and digital platforms, audiences tend to be more interested in content that uses light language because it's easier to understand and doesn't feel stiff. Language strategies like humour, light sarcasm, and the use of popular terms help increase audience attention and engagement with digital content.

According to Az-Zahra et al. (2023), using persuasive language is one of the key elements in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. Persuasive language is a type of language used to encourage and convince an audience to take a certain action, like buying a product. Phrases like "quality product," "affordable price," or "popular among consumers" are often used to grab people's attention. Using this strategy can spark curiosity and increase consumers' interest in the product being offered. This study is also

related to the theory of source credibility. This theory explains that audiences are more likely to trust someone who is seen as experienced, honest, and capable of delivering information well. Influencers who use simple language and share personal experiences when using products are usually more trusted by their followers. This trust can influence consumers to buy the promoted products. For example, in endorsement content on Instagram or TikTok. Influencers generally use a relaxed tone and appealing visuals so that the audience feels more familiar. This kind of delivery makes the promotion feel like advice from a friend, so consumers are more interested in trying the products offered.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Persuasive Communication Theory proposed by Carl I. Hovland explains that communication can be used to influence a person's attitudes, opinions, and behavior by delivering convincing messages. According to Hovland, the success of persuasive communication depends on three key elements: the message source, the message content, and the message receiver. A message source that is seen as knowledgeable, experienced, and credible is more likely to gain the audience's trust. In addition, messages that are clear, engaging, and in line with the audience's needs are more effective in shaping their thinking and actions.

In today's social media use, influencers act as message sources who introduce or recommend a product to their followers. The language strategies used by influencers are an important part of delivering these messages. Using the right words, an engaging style, personal experiences, and close interaction with the audience can make messages easier to accept and trust. Through effective language strategies, influencers can build consumer trust in the promoted products, which can encourage purchase decisions. Hovland's Persuasive Communication Theory can be used as a theoretical basis to explain how the language strategies used by influencers in social media content play a role in building consumer trust and influencing buying decisions through the persuasion process that occurs between influencers and their audience.

The Trust Theory developed by Roger C. Mayer, James H. Davis, and F. David Schoorman (1995) explains that trust is someone's willingness to accept vulnerability or risk based on the belief that the other party will act as expected. In this theory, trust doesn't happen automatically, but is built through three main dimensions: ability, benevolence, and integrity.

Ability refers to the knowledge, skills, and competencies someone has in a specific field. In the context of influencers, ability is seen in how well an influencer understands the product being promoted and their skill in delivering information clearly and convincingly. Language strategies that show product understanding, like using detailed explanations, informative language, and first-hand product experience, can boost consumers' perception of the influencer's competence. When consumers think an influencer is skilled, they are more likely to trust the information being shared.

Benevolence: showing concern and a desire to benefit others without merely chasing personal gain. On social media content, an influencer's good intentions can be seen through the use of honest language, providing objective reviews, and presenting the pros and cons of products in a balanced way. Language strategies that show care for the audience's needs will make followers feel that the influencer genuinely wants to help them find the right products, which can boost trust.

Integrity is related to honesty, consistency, and alignment between words and actions. Influencers who maintain integrity usually share information that's fact-based, avoid making exaggerated claims, and are consistent in their product recommendations. Using clear and straightforward language is an important factor in building a sense of integrity. The higher the integrity perceived by the audience, the more trust they tend to give to the influencer.

In research on language strategies in influencer content for building trust and buyer decisions, trust theory is used to explain that language is not just a communication tool, but also a means to shape consumers' perceptions of an influencer's competence, good intentions, and integrity. Choosing the right words, using a communicative style, sharing personal experiences, and delivering information honestly and transparently can boost consumers' trust in both the influencer and the promoted products.

The trust that has been built then becomes an important factor influencing purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to be more confident in buying a product if the information they receive comes from influencers who are seen as competent, well-intentioned, and trustworthy. Therefore, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) Trust Theory can be used as a theoretical basis to explain the relationship between influencers' language strategies, the formation of consumer trust, and purchasing decisions on social media.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on gaining a deep understanding of the communication phenomena that occur in the interactions between influencers and audiences during TikTok live sessions. Through this approach, the researcher can examine language use in more detail, including word choices, delivery styles, forms of persuasion, and the communication strategies influencers use to build trust and encourage audiences to make purchases.

The focus of this research is to analyse the language strategies used by influencers in live broadcasts (TikTok live) to build consumer trust and influence purchase decisions. In this study, language strategies are understood as the way influencers deliver messages, information, and calls to action to the audience during the live selling process.

This study looks at four main aspects. First, ability, which is the use of language that shows the influencer's knowledge and understanding of the product being promoted. Second, benevolence, which is language that reflects the influencer's concern for consumers' needs and interests. Third, integrity, which is language that shows honesty, transparency, and consistency in delivering product information. Fourth, persuasive language, which is the use of words or expressions aimed at influencing the audience to be interested and motivated to make a purchase.

The object of this study is the speech delivered by influencers during live broadcasts (live TikTok) when promoting products to the audience. The speech includes all forms of verbal communication used by influencers to interact with viewers during live selling activities.

Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Primary data was obtained directly through observation of live broadcasts (live TikTok) of influencers who promote and sell products. The data collected includes speech, language use, and the forms of communication the influencers use to build trust and influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is obtained from various literature sources, such as books, scientific journals, articles, and previous research relevant to language strategies, persuasive communication, consumer trust, and purchasing decisions. This data is used to support and strengthen the research findings.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques in this study were carried out through observation and documentation. Observation was conducted by directly watching live broadcasts (live TikTok) of influencers promoting products to their audience from May 10–15, 2026. The data collected consisted of speech, expressions, and forms of communication used by the influencers in building trust and influencing consumer purchasing decisions.

Table 1. Research Observation Focus

No	Observed Aspect	Indicator
1	Persuasive Language Strategy	Encouragement and push to buy products
2	Building Trust	Testimonials, sales proof, and product usage experiences
3	Product Information	Explanation of the benefits and advantages of the product
4	Interaction with the Audience	Responses to viewers' questions and comments
5	Purchase Decisions	Speech that motivates consumers to make a purchase

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study uses the Miles and Huberman model, which includes:

Data Reduction

The observation data is selected and focused on the influencer's speech related to language strategies in building trust and influencing purchasing decisions.

Data Presentation

The reduced data is presented in descriptive form and tables to make the analysis process easier.

Drawing Conclusions

Conclusions are drawn from the analysis of the language strategies used by influencers during TikTok live streams.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 2.1 Observation Results of Influencers' Language Strategy on Live TikTok

No	Influencer Quotes/Statements	Language Strategy	Indicators	Meaning
1	" <i>Buruan checkout, stok tinggal sedikit.</i> " (Let's check out soon, stocks are running low)	Persuasive	Creating Urgency	Encouraging consumers to buy immediately
2	" <i>Produk ini sudah terjual lebih dari 10 ribu pcs.</i> " (This product has already sold over 10 thousand pieces)	Building trust	Social Proof	Building consumer confidence
3	" <i>Aku sendiri sudah pakai produk ini selama 3 bulan.</i> " (I've been using this product for 3 months)	Testimonial	Personal Experience	Increasing the influencer's credibility
4	" <i>Kalau barangnya tidak sesuai, bisa dikembalikan.</i> " (If the item isn't right, it can be returned)	Guarantee	Reducing Purchase Risk	Creating a sense of security for buyers

Based on observations of Live TikTok activities carried out by influencers during the research period, it was found that language strategy is a key element in building effective marketing communication. Influencers not only act as product information messengers but also as communicators who try to build audience trust through the use of persuasive, communicative, and everyday-life relatable language.

Research results show that there are four language strategies mainly used by influencers, namely:

- Persuasive language through direct invitations to buy products.
- Personal testimonials showing their experience using the product.
- Social proof in the form of sales numbers and positive customer feedback.
- Product guarantees that give potential buyers a sense of security.

Of the four strategies, persuasive language is the one most often used during Live Selling. Influencers repeatedly use phrases like 'hurry and check out before it's gone,' 'only a few left in stock,' or 'the promo is only valid tonight' to create a sense of urgency, pushing the audience to make a buying decision quickly.

In addition, influencers also share their personal experiences using the product

through direct testimonials. This strategy gives the impression that the promoted product has actually been used and proven beneficial by the influencer themselves. On the other hand, using social proof, like information that the product has been sold thousands of times, can strengthen the audience's positive perception of the product's quality. Research also shows that offering a return guarantee if the product doesn't meet expectations helps reduce consumer doubts. This strategy creates a sense of security, making the audience more confident in making a purchase.

DISCUSSIONS

Research shows that the language strategies used by influencers on TikTok Live play an important role in building consumer trust and influencing purchasing decisions. This finding aligns with the current development of social media, which not only serves as a means of communication but also as a digital marketing space that allows direct interaction between sellers and buyers.

Persuasive Language Strategies in Pushing Purchase Decisions

Research findings show that persuasive language is a strategy commonly used by influencers. Phrases like “hurry and check out before it's gone,” “only a few left in stock,” or “promo only valid tonight” are intended to create a sense of urgency, pushing the audience to buy the product immediately.

These findings support Carl I. Hovland's Persuasive Communication theory, which explains that communication can be used to change a person's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through convincing messages. In the context of this study, influencers act as the source of the message (communicator), trying to influence the audience through the use of appealing and persuasive language.

According to Hovland, the effectiveness of persuasion is influenced by the credibility of the communicator and the content of the message delivered. The persuasive language used by influencers can create a psychological urge in the audience, making them feel the need to make a purchase decision immediately. Therefore, buying decisions are not only influenced by the quality of the product but also by how the product is communicated to the audience.

This finding also supports the opinion of Az-Zahra et al. (2023), who stated that persuasive language is one of the important elements in influencing consumer behavior because it can increase interest and curiosity about the product being offered.

Personal Testimony as a Way to Boost Credibility

Research results show that influencers often use personal experiences in promoting products, such as the statement 'I've been using this product myself for three months.' This strategy gives the impression that the influencer has real experience with the product, so the information presented is considered more trustworthy.

This finding aligns with the Trust Theory proposed by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman. In this theory, one of the factors that builds trust is ability. When an influencer can explain the benefits of a product based on direct experience, their personal experience also strengthens the perception that the promotion isn't just an advertisement, but a recommendation based on real use. This makes it easier for the audience to accept the information and increases their trust in the promoted product.

Building Consumers' Trusts

Research found that influencers often use social proof strategies through information about the number of purchases or how many consumers have used the product. For example, in speech “*produk ini sudah terjual lebih dari 10 ribu pcs*”.

This strategy shows that influencers take advantage of the audience's psychological tendency to trust something that has been accepted by many people. The more users a product has, the more confident potential buyers are that the product is of good quality.

From the perspective of Trust Theory, the use of social proof is related to the dimensions of integrity and ability. Information about the number of buyers serves as an indicator that the product has a good reputation and has been recognized by other consumers.

These findings also support the research by Wirapraja et al (2023), which explains that influencer marketing can boost audience trust because people tend to use influencers as a reference when making buying decisions.

Product guarantees give potential buyers a sense of security

Another strategy found is giving assurances to the audience, for example through statements like “if the product doesn’t meet expectations, it can be returned.” This strategy helps reduce the perceived risk when buying products online.

In Mayer et al.’s trust theory, this strategy is related to the dimensions of benevolence (good intentions) and integrity. Influencers who provide information about guarantees or product returns show that they care about the audience’s interests. This creates the perception that the influencer isn’t just focused on sales, but also cares about buyer satisfaction.

When purchasing risks can be minimized, consumer confidence goes up, making it easier to make buying decisions. In other words, the sense of security built through this language strategy directly contributes to the formation of purchase intentions.

Overall, the results of the research show that the way influencers use language on TikTok Live works not just as a marketing communication tool, but also as a way to build consumer trust. Persuasive language encourages the audience to take action, personal testimonials boost credibility, social proof strengthens belief in the product, while product guarantees reduce purchase risk. All of these strategies work together to shape consumer trust, which ultimately affects buying decisions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the language strategies used by influencers on TikTok Live play an important role in building consumer trust and influencing purchasing decisions. The most dominant strategy is the use of persuasive language, supported by personal testimonials, social proof, and product guarantees. This combination of strategies can enhance the perception of influencer credibility, build consumer trust, and encourage purchase decisions. These findings show that using communicative, persuasive, and credible language is an important factor in successful marketing through TikTok Live.

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