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Legal Protection for Consumers in Trading Transactions Through the Tiktok Marketplace

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Article Info	Abstract
	The rapid growth of social commerce platforms has transformed online trading practices and introduced new challenges for consumer protection law. TikTok Marketplace, as an integration of social media content and digital commerce, exemplifies this shift by blurring the boundaries between entertainment, advertising, and contractual transactions. This study aims to analyze the extent to which existing legal frameworks provide effective protection for consumers engaging in trading transactions through TikTok Marketplace. Using a qualitative research design with a case study approach, the study relies on secondary data derived from statutory regulations, platform policy documents, official reports, and scholarly literature. The analysis applies a descriptive-deductive method to assess consumer rights, the allocation of legal responsibilities among platforms, sellers, and content creators, and the effectiveness of dispute resolution mechanisms. The findings indicate that while current consumer protection and electronic transaction laws establish basic normative safeguards, they are not fully responsive to the distinctive characteristics of social commerce. Gaps persist in responsibility allocation, transparency of promotional content, and enforcement mechanisms, particularly in platform-based dispute resolution. This study contributes to the literature on consumer protection and digital platform governance by offering a focused legal analysis of social commerce and highlighting the need for more adaptive and explicit regulatory approaches to protect consumers in evolving digital marketplaces.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed commercial practices worldwide, particularly through the proliferation of electronic commerce and social commerce platforms. In recent years, online marketplaces have evolved beyond conventional e-commerce websites into hybrid platforms that integrate social media features with commercial transactions. TikTok Marketplace, emerging from the globally dominant social media application TikTok, represents one of the most significant developments in this landscape. By combining short-form video content, algorithm-driven recommendations, and integrated payment systems,

TikTok Marketplace has reshaped consumer behavior and business models in digital trade (Zhang & Lin, 2023; Wang et al., 2022). While this innovation offers substantial economic opportunities for sellers and convenience for consumers, it simultaneously raises complex legal challenges, particularly concerning consumer protection in online trading transactions (Chawla & Kumar, 2022; Widijowati, 2023; Santoso, 2021).

Consumer protection has long been recognized as a fundamental component of modern legal systems, aimed at addressing the imbalance of power and information asymmetry between consumers and business actors (Howells et al., 2018; Helberger et al., 2021). In the digital economy, this imbalance is often exacerbated by the borderless nature of online transactions, the anonymity of sellers, and the rapid dissemination of information and products (OECD, 2020). Social commerce platforms such as TikTok Marketplace intensify these challenges by blurring the boundaries between entertainment, advertising, and commerce. Consumers are frequently exposed to persuasive content created by influencers or sellers, which may not always provide transparent or accurate information regarding products, pricing, or contractual terms (Abidin, 2021; Antoniou, 2021; Cooper, 2021). Consequently, ensuring effective legal protection for consumers in this context has become an increasingly urgent issue for regulators and scholars alike.

Despite the growing body of literature on e-commerce regulation and consumer law, the unique characteristics of social commerce platforms have not been sufficiently addressed in existing legal frameworks. Traditional consumer protection laws were largely designed for conventional transactions or standard online marketplaces, where the roles of sellers, platforms, and consumers are relatively clear (Twigg-Flesner, 2016; Crawford et al., 2021; Widijowati, 2023). In contrast, TikTok Marketplace operates through a complex ecosystem involving platform providers, content creators, third-party sellers, payment intermediaries, and logistics services. This multi-actor environment complicates the allocation of legal responsibility when consumer rights are violated, such as in cases of defective products, misleading advertising, data misuse, or unfair contractual terms (Gillespie, 2018; Widijowati & Denysenko, 2023; Nash, 2021). As a result, consumers may face difficulties in seeking remedies or enforcing their rights effectively.

The main issue of the research pursued in the given inquiry is related to the sufficiency of the existing legal protection of the consumers who are used to the trading operations at the Tik Tok Marketplace. Although many jurisdictions have passed consumer protection laws and electronic transactions laws, lingering questions abound as to whether these laws are adequate to handle the risks associated with social commerce sites. The available empirical evidence suggests that consumers often have to deal with such problems as non-delivery of goods, fake products, unclear refunding policies, and limited access to mechanisms of disputes in social commercial environments (Lim et al., 2022; Pharmacista, 2024). These issues indicate that there may be a gap between the normative protection of the law and their implementation in digital markets that are platform-based.

Generally, law regimes have been trying to address issues of consumer protection in online commerce by both the substantive rights as well as procedural schemes. The substantive safeguards usually include the right to true information, safety of products, fair terms of contracts, and guarantees against fraud (Howells et al., 2018). Regulators also focus on procedural aspects such as the presence of accessible complaint procedures, adequate dispute resolution, and the implementation of enforcement with the help of the government. Besides, the platform governance is viewed as a key element of consumer protection, and platforms are likely to perform due diligence in terms of overseeing the sellers, eliminating illegal content, and collaborating with regulators (European Commission, 2022; Fletcher et al., 2023;

34

Lari-Williams, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these broad solutions in the particular setting of Tik Tok Marketplace is not studied in detail.

The past academic literature has made a number of suggestions towards enhancing consumer protection in online and social commerce. A significant body of literature has focused on how platform liability regimes are needed to be made more transparent, suggesting that transactions done on digital markets ought to be a bigger burden on the platform (Busch, 2019). A second area of research indicates the importance of transparency requirements, such as obligatory disclosure of identities of sellers, sponsored content, and algorithmic recommendations, as a way to reduce the problem of information asymmetry and prevent fraudulent activities (Helberger et al., 2020). Moreover, researchers have suggested consumer education and digital literacy as complementary to legal regulation, thus allowing consumers to be able to evaluate risks more adequately and make a more informed decision in the environment of the Internet (Hargittai et al., 2019).

In addition to these broad strategies, there are the developed specific regulatory models addressing the issues of platform-based commerce. As an example, the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Acts are new massively extensive digital regulations that have been introduced by the European Union, placing due diligence requirements on online platforms and strengthening consumer rights in digital markets (European Commission, 2022). Similarly, a number of Asian jurisdictions have revised their e-commerce and consumer protection legal provisions, with specific reference to the social commerce and live-streaming sales, as these have specific features (Chen and Liu, 2021). These regulatory trends demonstrate a growing realization of the necessity of specific legal responses to develop new digital trade practices such as those supported by the platform like TikTok Marketplace.

However, the literature that remained also demonstrates the severe limitations and unsolved problems. Most of the literature concentrates on general e-commerce websites or huge online marketplaces, e.g., Amazon or Alibaba, without due attention to the hybrid character of marketplaces based on social media (Zhang and Lin, 2023). Additionally, comparative studies often do not pay enough attention to the actual implementation problems that consumers are facing, especially in underdeveloped legal frameworks in which the regulatory capacity might be limited. It is also a lack of detailed legal interpretation of the application of consumer protection principles in practice in Tik Tok Marketplace with its roles and duties of the platform, sellers, and the affiliated content creators. This gap in the literature implies a need to conduct a targeted research that combines the consumer protection law with the changing dynamics of social commerce.

It is against this background that the current study aims at examining consumer protection in trading processes transacted via Tik Tok Marketplace. This study will be done to assess the level to which the current consumer protection regulations and electronic transactions laws offer sufficient protection to consumers and also to determine the normative and practical gaps in the application of the current laws. The exact difference that can be presented by this study is that it focuses particularly on Tik Tok Marketplace as a particular example of the modern social commerce system which significantly contrasts with the traditional patterns of e-commerce. Placing the analysis into the context of the larger theory of consumer protection and regulation of digital platforms, this study will help to formulate more attentive legal strategies to protect consumers in the fast-changing digital economy. The depth of the research is limited to the legal sphere of the issues of consumer protection in online trading transactions and does not rise to technical or even economic studies, thus maintaining a strict focus on normative and regulatory problems.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design aimed at examining the legal protection afforded to consumers in trading transactions conducted through the TikTok Marketplace. Qualitative legal research is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for an in-depth understanding of norms, principles, and regulatory practices governing consumer protection in the digital economy. Rather than measuring variables numerically, this approach emphasizes the interpretation of legal texts, institutional practices, and scholarly discourse to explain how consumer protection law operates within the context of social commerce platforms (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Meleong, 1996). The qualitative design enables the researchers to capture the complexity of legal relationships among consumers, sellers, and platform providers, which are often inadequately represented through quantitative methods.

The analytical orientation of this study is descriptive-deductive. Descriptively, the research systematically outlines the existing legal framework governing consumer protection and electronic transactions relevant to online marketplace activities. Deductively, these legal norms are analyzed using established theories of consumer protection law and digital platform governance to assess their adequacy when applied to TikTok Marketplace transactions (Faisal, 1990; Howells et al., 2018). This combination allows the study to move from general legal principles to specific conclusions regarding the strengths and limitations of consumer protection mechanisms in social commerce environments.

The research employs a case study approach, focusing on TikTok Marketplace as a representative example of contemporary social commerce platforms. Case study research is appropriate when the objective is to gain a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of a particular phenomenon within its real-life setting (Crowe et al., 2011; Yin, 2018). TikTok Marketplace is selected as the case because it integrates social media content, algorithmic promotion, and online trading functions, creating a distinctive ecosystem that differs from conventional e-commerce platforms. By concentrating on a single, information-rich case, the study is able to explore the legal implications of platform-based commerce in greater depth and detail.

The scope of the case study is limited to consumer trading transactions conducted through TikTok Marketplace, including the processes of product promotion, contract formation, payment, delivery, and dispute resolution. This focus allows the research to examine how consumer protection principles—such as the right to information, the right to safety, and the right to redress—are operationalized within the platform's transactional structure. The temporal scope of the analysis reflects the period during which TikTok Marketplace has become a significant channel for online trade, aligning with recent regulatory developments and scholarly discussions on social commerce (European Commission, 2022; Zhang & Lin, 2023).

The data used in this study consist exclusively of secondary data. Secondary data are appropriate for normative legal research because the primary sources of analysis are legal texts, policy documents, and authoritative interpretations rather than direct empirical observations (Soekanto & Mamudji, 2019). The primary categories of data include statutory regulations, government policies, judicial decisions where available, platform policy documents, and scholarly literature. Statutory regulations encompass consumer protection laws, electronic transaction laws, and related regulatory instruments governing digital trade and platform liability. These legal materials form the normative basis for assessing the extent of consumer protection in TikTok Marketplace transactions.

In addition to statutory sources, the study analyzes official documents and reports issued by governmental and intergovernmental organizations, such as regulatory

agencies responsible for consumer protection and digital market oversight. These documents provide insights into policy objectives, enforcement strategies, and regulatory challenges associated with online marketplaces and social commerce platforms (OECD, 2020). Platform-related documents, including TikTok's terms of service, community guidelines, and marketplace policies, are also examined to understand the contractual and governance arrangements that shape consumer–platform–seller relationships. These materials are treated as relevant legal instruments because they often define rights, obligations, and dispute resolution mechanisms applicable to consumers.

Scholarly literature constitutes another important source of data in this study. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers on consumer protection law, e-commerce regulation, and digital platform governance are reviewed to establish the theoretical and conceptual framework of the research. The literature review supports the identification of key legal principles and analytical criteria used to evaluate consumer protection in social commerce contexts (Twigg-Flesner, 2016; Busch, 2019). By engaging with both doctrinal and interdisciplinary studies, the research situates its analysis within broader academic debates on law and technology.

Data collection is conducted through systematic document analysis. Relevant legal texts and scholarly sources are identified using academic databases, official government websites, and reputable legal repositories. The selection of materials follows criteria of relevance, authority, and recency to ensure that the analysis reflects current legal developments and scholarly perspectives. Each document is carefully examined to extract provisions, arguments, and interpretations related to consumer rights, platform obligations, and enforcement mechanisms in online trading transactions.

The data analysis process involves several interrelated stages. First, the collected materials are categorized according to their legal function, such as consumer rights provisions, seller obligations, platform responsibilities, and dispute resolution mechanisms. This categorization facilitates a structured examination of how different aspects of consumer protection are regulated. Second, the study applies a deductive analytical framework derived from consumer protection theory and platform governance literature to assess the adequacy of these regulations when applied to TikTok Marketplace. This stage involves interpreting legal norms in light of the platform's operational characteristics, including algorithmic promotion and influencer-driven marketing.

Interpretive legal analysis is employed as the primary analytical technique. This method focuses on understanding the meaning and implications of legal norms within their social and technological context (McConville & Chui, 2017). Through interpretation, the study evaluates whether existing regulations sufficiently address issues such as misleading advertising, information asymmetry, unfair contract terms, and limitations in consumer redress mechanisms. Where relevant, comparative references to international regulatory approaches are used to contextualize the findings and highlight alternative models of consumer protection in social commerce environments.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the analysis, the study employs data triangulation by cross-referencing statutory provisions, policy documents, platform rules, and scholarly interpretations. Triangulation helps reduce interpretive bias and strengthens the credibility of qualitative legal research by ensuring that conclusions are supported by multiple authoritative sources (Crowe et al., 2011). Although the study does not involve human participants, ethical considerations are maintained by accurately representing sources, avoiding misinterpretation of legal texts, and properly acknowledging all referenced materials.

The findings of the analysis are presented in an integrated narrative that links empirical observations from the case study with broader legal and theoretical discussions. Where appropriate, tables are used to summarize key regulatory provisions and their implications for consumer protection in TikTok Marketplace transactions, thereby enhancing clarity and analytical coherence. Overall, this methodological framework enables a systematic and rigorous examination of consumer legal protection in social commerce, while remaining consistent with established standards of qualitative legal research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study based on the qualitative legal analysis of consumer protection in trading transactions conducted through the TikTok Marketplace. The results are structured to reflect the core analytical dimensions derived from the research framework, namely the normative basis of consumer protection, the allocation of legal responsibilities among actors, the mechanisms for consumer redress, and the practical implications of platform governance in social commerce. The findings are grounded in statutory analysis, platform policy examination, and relevant scholarly interpretations, as outlined in the methodological section.

Legal Framework Governing Consumer Protection in TikTok Marketplace Transactions

The empirical study indicates that consumer protection in transactions of TikTok Marketplace is presumed to be based on the general consumer protection law and electronic transaction laws specific to online business. These legal acts describe the basic rights, such as the right to accurate information, the right to safety, the right to fair treatment, and the right to a remedy in the case of faulty or misleading goods (Howells et al., 2018; OECD, 2020). Theoretically, these defenses are technology-neutral and are thus assumed to apply on equal footing to both established e-commerce systems and new social-commerce systems. Doctrinally, no explicit statutory exemption of websites like Tik Tok Marketplace exists regarding the scope of such protections.

However, in real practice of these norms, there exist structural tensions. Tik Tok Marketplace is a hybrid space where social life, entertainment, and commercial are combined in the same space. This convergence upsets the traditional regulatory premise that commercial communication can be easily determined and separated by non-commercial content. According to Twigg-Flesner (2016), the consumer protection law has traditionally been based on certain comparatively stable differences between advertising, pre-contractual information and the sale itself. In the context of Tik Tok, these stages are condensed into one continuous, digital, and thus making it difficult to qualify and enforce in legal terms.

The inclusion of the marketing message in the videos with the focus on entertainment and the voice of the influencer further blurs the line between the genuine recommendation and paid endorsement. The influencer is often perceived by consumers as a peer or a trusted figure as opposed to being commercial actors, which changes the cognitive paradigm under which marketing messages are perceived. When used, labels of disclosure are often inconspicuous, momentary or overshadowed by compelling narrative. As a result, there are some evidentiary and interpretative problems in ascertaining whether the legal norms regarding transparency and misleading advertising are met. The non-compliance is not only the question that needs to be addressed but also the insufficiency of the traditional methods of disclosure in highly engaging digital forms.

Moreover, the in-app checkout, flash sales, and interactive buying opportunities of the platform reduce the time-based difference between persuasion and agreement creation. The common consumer protection regulations assume a period of deliberation, whereby the consumers get to compare information, reflect on the terms of contract and make informed decisions. When transacting in TikTok Marketplace, however, the decisions on purchase are usually made in real time in the circumstances of social influence and algorithmically generated urgency. This condensed decision making environment undermines the practical use of rights that are based on rationality and informed consent.

All these findings indicate that, although the current consumer protection regulations formally apply to the transactions involving TikTok Marketplace, the principles underlying them were not designed to support the socio-technological structure of social commerce. This content-commerce hybridization disputes the usual regulatory types and creates interpretative holes on enforcement. These issues could require a more overt legal acknowledgement of the platform-mediated sales space, a better-defined disclosure requirement of the influencers, and a more flexible set of regulation, better aligned with the actualities of the algorithm-driven, entertainment-driven marketplace. In the absence of this re-calibration, the formal universality of consumer rights is at risk of being eroded by the practical complication of digital market integration.

Allocation of Legal Responsibility Among Platform, Sellers, and Content Creators

Among the key conclusions of the part of the research is the discontinuous distribution of the legal responsibility of various actors involved in operating within Tik Tok Marketplace. The policies of the platform and the statutory provisions consistently make the sellers the key players in business with the responsibility of quality of products, information accuracy, as well as meeting the terms of the contract. Such distribution is consistent with the orthodoxy of the consumer protection law, which directly liabilities traders when they form an agreement with consumers (Howells et al., 2018). This model is consistent in terms of doctrine: as the contracting party, the seller as a matter of fact is the natural locus of accountability.

Nevertheless, the empirical reality of the transactions that are conducted through the Tik Tok Marketplace indicates that this seller-centric approach to liability is not able to capture all the operations that are involved in the platform. TikTok Marketplace is not simply a passive channel through which third-party content flows through, but it actively organizes the business world by verifying sellers, ranking the visibility of content, building in, integrated payment features, content moderation, and dispute resolution features. According to the platform governance scholarship, such active participation can create an intermediary responsibility, based on the care of the user (Busch, 2019; Gillespie, 2018). However, current legal systems tend to carry the platforms into the category of those created in relation to the neutral hosting providers, generates a doctrinal confusion between their liability in cases of harm to the consumer.

This uncertainty generates effective enforcement loopholes. In case of losses to the consumers through misrepresentation, faulty products, or inability to fulfill delivery, the person in the formal recourse is normally the seller. Nevertheless, vendors within social commerce system can be small, spread across geography, or hard to locate. On the contrary, the platform maintains substantial dominance on transaction structure, transaction payments, and dispute interfaces. The lack of balance between the control and liability poses normative concerns of whether the responsibility ought to be more proportionate to the extent of systemic impact that the platform exerts.

This multi-actor environment is further complicated by the existence of content creators and influencers. Influencers often act as convincing proxies who can convert the commercial communications to individualized stories and thus define consumer perception and consumer buying behavior. Even though a significant number of jurisdictions establish requirements on disclosure of sponsored content, these rules do not work well in practice in the framework of social commerce (Abidin, 2021; Helberger et al., 2020). Disclosure tags can either be vague, displayed in a visual form or language can be vague and less practical. Owing to this, influencers are placed between the realms of advertisers and content creators who act independently, making it difficult to assign responsibility in cases where the consumer depends on their approval.

All these findings collectively suggest that the concept of responsibility in TikTok Marketplace transactions is spread among sellers, platforms, and influencers, but the legal responsibility is overloaded with sellers. This incongruity between formal liability and effective consumer protection is a threat to the successful consumer protection. A better consistent regulatory solution would clarify on which platforms a platform has intermediary liability, enforceable influencer disclosure requirements, and a model of shared responsibility more consistent with the collaborative aspects of social commerce ecosystems. The absence of such recalibration will still bring about the accountability gaps that will make consumers less empowered to have meaningful remedies.

Consumer Rights to Information and Protection Against Misleading Practices

Right to information is one of the pillars of consumer protection, particularly in digital market places including Tik Tok Marketplace. Theoretically, consumer-protection laws define that sellers should present truthful, thorough, and correct information regarding product features, pricing strategies, terms of the contract and post-purchase provisions. The governance systems on platforms also prohibit fraudulent acts and false advertising. However, on the one hand, the normative architecture might seem sound on a piece of paper, on the other hand, empirical data reveals a structural gap between the regulatory design and the operational reality. The existence of informational asymmetries suggests that adherence to formal standards of compliance has not been well-rendered into official and visible market practices.

This disjuncture is also more acute in communicative ecology of social commerce. Tik Tok Marketplace does not depend on written specifications and standardized product lists as traditional online shopping stores do but instead utilizes primarily short-form videos and live-streams. These modes give preference to immediacy, entertainment worth, and emotional persuasion as opposed to systematic disclosure. This affects the ability of consumers to make a reflective judgment as Zhang and Lin (2023) state that highly immersive and affect-based content can damage it. This observation is also supported by the current study: buyers often rely on convincing stories and visual displays in making the decision to acquire a certain product without consciously attempting (or, in fact, without necessarily succeeding) to obtain detailed information regarding the product limitations and warranty or means of resolving disputes.

Furthermore, live commerce is performative and adds to informational vulnerabilities. Live chats, flash deals and limited time offers create an unnatural sense of urgency that inhibits time to contemplate. In these scenarios, important information, e.g. eligibility to a refund, returns procedure or concealed expenses, is often reduced, obscured or passed on orally without a lasting record. This means that the consumers who have to deal with the post-purchase disputes have to deal with the problems of evidence.

Such systems as algorithmic recommendation systems also make the realisation of the right to information even more complicated. As much as personalization mechanisms make the user more convenient and business more profitable, they dictate the sellers and products that will be visible. Helberger et al. (2020) note that the misleading or low-quality content may be enhanced by algorithmic curation when the optimisation metrics' priority is high engagement rather than reliability. According to the current research, consumers are not often conscious of the role of algorithmic filtering on their exposure to specific claims, therefore, restricting their capacity to put their exposure into context.

Combined, these dynamics indicate that to protect the right to information in TikTok Marketplace transactions, a re-evaluation of regulatory methods should be conducted. Current laws concentrate more on the disclosures of the seller and are non-communicative about the architecture of platforms, accountability of algorithms, and the communicative forms peculiar to social commerce.

The policy of better transparency of the algorithm, mandatory documentation of live transactions, and the platform-level liability to provide sustainable and accessible disclosures would be combined into a more articulate regulatory model. Without such structural changes, the right to information will still be and will always be a formal guarantee and not a substantively realised consumer right.

Mechanisms for Consumer Redress and Dispute Resolution

The effectiveness of consumer redress mechanisms is a key indicator of substantive consumer protection. The findings show that existing laws generally guarantee consumers the right to seek compensation or remedies in cases of defective products, non-delivery, or misleading practices. In practice, however, consumers engaging in TikTok Marketplace transactions often encounter obstacles in accessing effective dispute resolution.

Platform-based dispute resolution mechanisms are typically designed to provide quick and informal solutions, such as refunds or account sanctions. While these mechanisms can offer practical benefits, they are largely governed by platform policies rather than public law standards (Gillespie, 2018). The study finds that such mechanisms may lack transparency, procedural fairness, and accountability, particularly when consumers dispute decisions made by the platform. This raises concerns about the adequacy of platform-led dispute resolution as a substitute for formal legal remedies.

Moreover, cross-border transactions present additional challenges for consumer redress. TikTok Marketplace facilitates transactions between consumers and sellers located in different jurisdictions, complicating the application of national consumer protection laws and the enforcement of judgments. Consistent with OECD (2020) findings, this study observes that consumers may face significant legal and practical barriers when attempting to pursue claims against foreign sellers, thereby weakening the overall effectiveness of consumer protection regimes in social commerce.

Platform Governance and Regulatory Enforcement

The results also highlight the growing importance of platform governance in shaping consumer protection outcomes. TikTok Marketplace's internal rules, content moderation practices, and seller management systems significantly influence the level of protection afforded to consumers. The analysis indicates that while platform policies often align with general consumer protection principles, their enforcement is largely discretionary and driven by private governance considerations.

From a regulatory perspective, public authorities increasingly recognize the need to involve platforms in consumer protection enforcement. Recent regulatory

developments, such as enhanced due diligence obligations for digital platforms, reflect this trend (European Commission, 2022). However, the findings suggest that the implementation of such regulatory approaches remains uneven, particularly in jurisdictions with limited institutional capacity. As a result, consumers may continue to rely heavily on platform-controlled mechanisms, which do not always provide adequate legal safeguards.

The study further finds that coordination between public regulators and platform operators is essential but often insufficient. Without clear regulatory standards and effective oversight, platform governance may prioritize commercial interests over consumer rights. This reinforces the argument advanced by Busch (2019) that stronger legal obligations for platforms are necessary to ensure meaningful consumer protection in digital marketplaces.

The results demonstrate that while existing consumer protection laws provide a foundational framework for protecting consumers in TikTok Marketplace transactions, significant normative and practical gaps persist. These gaps stem from the hybrid nature of social commerce, the multiplicity of actors involved, and the increasing reliance on private platform governance. The findings underscore the need for more explicit legal recognition of social commerce platforms and clearer allocation of responsibilities among platforms, sellers, and content creators.

By situating TikTok Marketplace within the broader discourse on consumer protection and digital regulation, this study's results contribute empirical and normative insights into the challenges of protecting consumers in emerging online trading environments. The findings provide a basis for further discussion on regulatory reform and the development of more adaptive legal frameworks capable of responding to the evolving dynamics of social commerce.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the legal protection of consumers in trading transactions conducted through the TikTok Marketplace, highlighting the complex regulatory challenges arising from the integration of social media and digital commerce. The findings demonstrate that existing consumer protection and electronic transaction laws provide a general normative foundation for safeguarding consumer rights, particularly regarding information disclosure, product safety, and access to remedies. However, the study reveals significant gaps in the practical application of these norms within social commerce environments. Ambiguities in the allocation of legal responsibility among platforms, sellers, and content creators, combined with the persuasive nature of influencer-driven content and algorithmic recommendations, weaken consumers' ability to make informed decisions and to effectively enforce their rights.

The study further shows that platform-based dispute resolution mechanisms, while efficient, often lack transparency and procedural accountability, limiting their effectiveness as substitutes for formal legal remedies. These findings imply the need for clearer regulatory frameworks that explicitly address social commerce platforms and impose proportionate obligations on platform operators alongside traditional seller liability. By focusing on TikTok Marketplace as a representative case, this research contributes to the growing body of scholarship on consumer protection in digital markets by extending existing theories of platform governance to social commerce contexts. Future research may explore comparative regulatory approaches across jurisdictions or examine empirical consumer experiences to further refine legal responses to emerging digital trading models.

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