

The Live Shopping Phenomenon on TikTok and its Impact on Local MSMEs (Study on Thrifting Traders in Gedebage Market, Bandung City)

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has changed the landscape of commerce, including the rise of live shopping features on TikTok. This study aims to examine the response of thrift MSME players in Gedebage Market, Bandung, to the TikTok Live trend. Different from previous studies that focus on new products, this research highlights thrift MSMEs that have not been widely researched. The method used is qualitative through in-depth interviews, observation, and media content analysis. The results show that Pasar Gedebage is a vibrant informal economy ecosystem, but digital adoption (especially TikTok Live) is still limited due to barriers of technological capital, digital literacy, and cultural resistance. Although social media has great potential as a promotional tool, its utilisation is still sporadic. In conclusion, thrift MSME players have not fully utilised TikTok Live and rely more on conventional methods. Support through informal networks and mentoring between business actors is needed to encourage adaptation to the digital economy.

Keywords: *Tiktok Live Shopping, Local Msmes, Gedebage Thrift Market, Digital Transformation.*

Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the trade sector. In this modern era, digitalization has become a very important aspect of human life and has brought about positive changes. Digitalization requires economic actors to continue to innovate in designing business strategies and are required to be able to identify existing market opportunities. A business strategy that is able to accomodate market criteria by utilizing various facilities and infrastructures that are increasingly advanced and developing becomes the most appropriate business strategy and is able to answer the challenges of increasing market competition. One of these business strategies is a marketing strategy (Sari et al, 2023). With digitalization, there are various platforms that make it easier for people to buy and sell products. The presence of this platform is also a marketing strategy for product sellers by utilizing the features in it. This is like in the TikTok platform which has a live shopping feature besides functioning as an entertainment platform. The phenomenon of live shopping is currently a marketing strategy that is in demand by business actors, especially MSMEs in marketing their products.

Based on the results of an Ipsos Indonesia survey in 2023, as many as 73% of MSMEs that use the live shopping method have increased their turnover, 68% of them said they could expand their market, and there are several other impacts felt by MSMEs (Erlina & Aribowo,

2023). With this feature, MSMEs can reach a wider range of consumers by only doing live shopping on a platform. TikTok is an application that originated in China, and initially became a place for its users to create and share short video. With features such as adding music features and using filters, it increases the creative value of the videos shared in the TikTok application. Over time and because of public interest, TikTok is now present as a place of business and marketing for business people. This has happened since TikTok released its newest feature, namely live streaming and began introducing live shopping to its users. The live shopping phenomenon on TikTok itself began when TikTok introduced the TikTok Shop feature, which is an e-commerce service that can reach business people (Yurindera, 2023). Through live shopping, MSMEs can show the products being sold and interact with customers in real time by answering customer questions (Sania et al, 2024). Live shopping also creates a more engaging shopping experience for costumers, thereby building trust and strengthening relationships with audiences or costumers (Adyaningtyas et al, 2024). In addition, live shopping often provides promotions to customers either from MSMEs (business actors) or from the platform itself such as free shipping, so that customers are interested in making purchases. In Indonesia,

Gedebage Market is known as a bustling center for thrift clothing sales, and it is interesting to review how its business actors respond to the TikTok live shopping trend. Thrift refers to saving, and in another definition is the resale of used goods both domestic and imported. Nowadays, people generally do thrifting by buying clothes, such as shirts, pants, sweaters, cardigans, dresses, and so on (Oktawiningsih et al, 2023). Thrift MSMEs in Gedebage Market sell thrift clothing with good quality and very affordable prices. With high competition and limited promotional capital, thrift MSMEs in Gedebage Market are a relevant object for studying TikTok live shopping as a digital marketing strategy used. Previous research conducted by researcher showed that TikTok Shop live streaming has a positive and significant influence on consumer trust and purchasing decisions (Yuarti et al, 2024). This influence occurs through direct and indirect relationships between word of mouth, live streaming, and purchasing decision.

Previous research also presented by researcher showed that the presence of live streaming not only strengthens consumer engagement but also increases trust in brands that drive purchasing decision (Riofita, 2025). The two studies above did not reveal the challenges and obstacles in adopting TikTok live shopping, so this study will explain the challenges and obstacles experienced by MSMEs in adopting TikTok live shopping. Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of socio-economic studies related to the relationship between digital technology and local economic practices using two relevant sociological theories, namely Pierre Bourdieu's Social Practice Theory and Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory. Pierre Bourdieu's Social Practice Theory has the concepts of habitus, capital, and arena (Farhana, 2024). Habitus is a way of thinking and acting that is formed from a person's life experiences that include habits, values, and perceptions that are internalized from the social environment. Capital refers to the various resources that individuals have, such as money, knowledge, social networks, and status or recognition. the capital that a person has can affect their position in society and their ability to complete with others. an arena is a social space where interaction and competition occur. In this arena, individuals are confronted with existing norms and power structures, which can influence their social practices Purwosautro & Maryanto, 2022). These three concepts of Social Practice Theory can be used to analyze the decisions of MSME actors in using or avoiding live shopping as a business strategy. Then the

Structuration Theory by Anthony Giddens explains social structure and individual action influence each other in a dynamic process.

Social structure includes the norms, rules, and resources that exist in a society, while individual action includes the decisions and behaviors that people make in that context. One of the key concepts in structuration theory is the "duality of structure", which means that social structure not only constrains individual action but is also shaped by it. This structural theory can explain the decision of business actors to use or not use live shopping is not only influenced by individual desires, but also by the social environment as a place to carry out activities (Achmad, 2020). Practically, this article can provide recommendations for MSME actors in responding to digital transformation. This study seeks to answer two main questions: (1) How do thrift MSME business actors at Gedebage Market recognize and practice TikTok live shopping as a marketing strategy, and (2) what challenges and obstacles do they face in the process. The novelty in this study is that it highlights thrift MSMEs, where previous studies focused more on new products.

Method

In This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to deeply explore the dynamics between thrift MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) actors at Gedebage Market and the ongoing wave of digitalization, particularly through the use of TikTok Live as a sales and marketing tool. A qualitative approach was chosen to allow the researcher to gain a contextual and in-depth understanding of the meanings, social practices, and structures that influence or limit how business actors respond to the shift toward a digital economic ecosystem. This method is especially suited to uncovering both adaptation and resistance processes, as well as the social inequalities that arise in the use of digital platforms within the informal economy.

The research was conducted at Gedebage Market, located in Bandung, West Java one of the most active and well known hubs for thrift (secondhand) clothing trade in the region. This market was intentionally selected because it represents a space where traditional commerce intersects with digital marketing trends. Within this setting, there are clear contrasts: some sellers have started using TikTok Live to promote and sell their products directly, while others still rely on conventional face to face transactions or prefer using alternative platforms. This contrast provides a rich context for observing how digital tools are adopted or rejected by different traders in the same environment. The participants in this study consisted of thrift MSME actors who either actively used TikTok for selling or deliberately chose not to. A purposive sampling method was used to select individuals based on their direct experience or lack thereof with TikTok Live. Some informants were regular TikTok users who had integrated the platform into their sales strategy, while others had either tried it briefly and stopped, or had never used it due to technical limitations, lack of knowledge, or preference for more familiar offline methods. By including this variation, the study aims to provide a well rounded picture of the motivations, challenges, and decision-making processes behind the use (or non-use) of digital technology among informal traders.

Data was collected using a triangulation strategy to enhance credibility and depth. Field observations were carried out directly at the market to understand the physical space, daily trading routines, and any infrastructure supporting digital activity. In depth semi structured interviews were conducted with eight participants from both user and non user groups, focusing on their personal experiences, perceptions of TikTok, and the specific obstacles they face. These interviews allowed participants to share their stories in their own words. In

addition, online observations were made of TikTok Live sessions hosted by active users, to analyze seller audience interaction styles, consistency in live broadcasting, and how well they utilized TikTok's built-in commerce features. Public documents and digital news articles were also reviewed to position this phenomenon within broader discussions of digital entrepreneurship in Indonesia.

Theoretically, the study is guided by two major frameworks. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus and social capital helps explain how traders' behavior is shaped by their life experiences, social positions, and access to different forms of capital economic, social, and cultural. Meanwhile, Anthony Giddens' structuration theory highlights the idea that MSME actors are not simply shaped by digital structures, but also act as agents who can adapt to, resist, or even reshape those structures through everyday actions. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, starting with data reduction, followed by data presentation, and finally drawing conclusions. This analysis focused on identifying patterns related to platform use, digital resistance, social learning, and economic strategies in how thrift MSME actors at Gedebage Market engage or choose not to engage with TikTok as part of their business operations.

Results and Discussion

Gedebage Thrift Market Profile

Cimol Gedebage Market, located in the eastern area of Bandung, precisely on Jalan Soekarno Hatta, is one of the largest second-hand trading centers in West Java and even in the country (Seputar Bandung, 2023). Widely known by the public as the "thrift market", this area has become a major destination for preloved fashion lovers from all walks of life (Putra, 2023). Not only does this market offer an economical alternative to consumption, but it is also a social and economic terrain that brings together thousands of micro-enterprises, consumers, and informal workers in one dynamic ecosystem. The history of Gedebage Market stems from the relocation of street vendors in the Cibadak area in the late 1990s (Putra, 2021). The name "Cimol" itself is an acronym for "Cibadak Mall", not just a pun on a food name as is often misinterpreted by the public. The Bandung City Government officially moved the market to the Gedebage area in 2004 to reorganize the city's spatial management and provide more representative facilities (Kamal, et al., 2024). Since then, the area has developed into an informal-based economic magnet that sustains the lives of many lower-middle-class families

According to a Daily report, the market consists of more than 1,000 stalls and kiosks, most of which sell used clothing imported from South Korea, Japan, Europe, and the United States (Utarsih, 2024). The items sold cover a wide range of categories, from jeans, jackets, blazers, t-shirts, shirts, to shoes and bags, both for adults and children. Some stalls even offer branded items such as Zara, Uniqlo, Nike, and Burberry, which are sold at prices ranging from Rp5,000 to Rp300,000, depending on the quality and rarity of the item (Seputar Bandung, 2023; Patricia et al, 2023). Gedebage Market is divided into two main zones: the open-air stall zone and the covered stall zone. Open-air stalls are generally active from early morning and offer a distinctive and open buying and selling atmosphere, while covered stalls provide more convenience for visitors with a neater and more structured interior arrangement (Puwaningwulan et al, 2024). Every weekend, especially ahead of holidays such as Lebaran or Christmas, the market can be visited by more than 15,000 people per day reflecting the high intensity of microeconomic circulation that takes place there (Tumangger, 2023).

From a social perspective, Gedebage Market plays an important role in providing informal employment. In addition to traders, there are other workers such as porters, goods sorters, parking service providers, to packers and couriers who all depend on trading activities in this market (Harleeputra et al., 2022). The economic practices that take place here are clear evidence of a people's economy that lives through social networks and layered relationships between individuals. However, in the midst of these dynamics, the adoption of digital technology is still relatively low. According to research, the level of utilization of digital technology by MSMEs in the secondhand clothing sector is still below 30%, especially in areas dominated by informal trade (Suarsa et al, 2025). This is a paradox considering that the potential of the digital market in Indonesia continues to increase rapidly, with e-commerce growth reaching double digits every year (Mahmud et al., 2024). The thrifting phenomenon itself has shifted in meaning. Previously synonymous with consumption among the economically limited, thrifting has now become part of the urban lifestyle of young people, fashion communities, and influencers. In their article in the *Journal of Sociotechnology ITB*, explained that the thrifting trend emerged as a response to the increasing awareness of sustainability and circular economy (Ayuningtyas et al, 2022).

Fashion consumption that used to be linear (buy, wear, discard) is now shifting to a circular model that extends the life cycle of products through repurchase and donation practices. However, although the consumer base is shifting to the digital native segment (young people who are active on the internet), most traders in Gedebage Market have not been able to accommodate this change. The contributing factors include limited technological capital (internet access, adequate devices), low digital literacy, and unpreparedness in terms of business mentality and culture. This market still relies heavily on face-to-face practices, with conventional transaction models such as haggling over prices, seeing first-hand the quality of goods, and paying in cash. In the context of economic sociology, Gedebage Market is a complex social arena. Referring to Pierre Bourdieu's social field theory, this market is a space where various forms of capital interact: economic capital (capital, trading assets), social capital (network relations between traders), cultural capital (knowledge of fashion, display aesthetics), and symbolic capital (trust and reputation). Merchants who have access to overseas suppliers, have large warehouses, and understand the tastes of young consumers are usually able to survive and even expand online. Meanwhile, small merchants who are just starting out or do not have community support, tend to stay in traditional buying and selling patterns that are increasingly pushed out by the times.

This poses a serious challenge in the context of digital transformation. According to a report, digitizing MSMEs can increase productivity by 25-30%, expand market reach, and lower operational costs (Juniarty et al., 2025). But to achieve this, it is not enough to provide a digital platform. It requires training, mentoring, and affirmative policies that target vulnerable groups in the informal sector. In the context of Pasar Gedebage, for example, intervention from the local government, cooperation with platforms such as TikTok or Shopee, and community involvement can be a bridge between tradition and transformation. Thus, Pasar Gedebage is not only a symbol of resistance to modernization, but also a huge untapped potential in Indonesia's digital economy map. Its presence reflects a vibrant social dynamic, where technological change, consumption culture, and social structure converge in one ever-evolving economic space. Therefore, understanding this market in depth is the first step to developing an inclusive strategy for micro, small, and informal businesses to participate in the ongoing national digital economy revolution.

Businesses' Existence and Acceptance of the Live Shopping Phenomenon on TikTok

Initial findings from field observations at 08.00 WIB showed that trading activities at the Gedebage Market had not yet fully started, although on Google Maps this market was listed as open since 07.00 WIB. Merchants seemed to be just getting ready, and only one merchant was found doing live TikTok, namely the @pskidsfashion shop. This shows that although theoretically TikTok Live Shopping opens up great opportunities in expanding consumer networks, in practice the adoption of this technology is still low in the Gedebage thrift market environment. In the interview session, Informant 1 (Dea), who works at the shop, mentioned that live is carried out from 09.00 WIB until night, carried out in shifts by three people, with the type of goods sold being children's clothing. However, interestingly, sales are not made directly through TikTok Shop, but using Shopee. TikTok is only a promotional medium. This was emphasized by Dea in her statement: *"In the Tiktok application, it has no effect, because if you want to buy (check out) using the shopee application, you don't use the tiktok shop. So, the TikTok application is only live (as a means of promotion)."*

Further observation of the TikTok account @pskidsfashion shows that the live activities are conducted quite professionally. During the live broadcast, the seller shows the clothes for sale, such as pants, skirts, and children's clothes, and explains the size of the clothes using a sewing meter, the clothes model, the price, and mentions the product code. The price of the clothes sold starts from Rp5,000. The seller explained the products using Indonesian and Sundanese while reading comments from the live audience. To make a purchase, consumers write a comment by mentioning the product code, then the seller records the consumer's TikTok username. Consumers are also asked to screenshot the clothes shown and confirm via the WhatsApp number listed on the TikTok account profile. This strategy shows that, despite not using TikTok Shop's checkout feature, actors still utilize live streaming as an interactive means to build trust and increase merchandise exposure. This practice is in line with findings from a report, which states that as many as 60% of digital MSME players in Indonesia use social media as a means of promotion, but only 18% take full advantage of integrated e-commerce features such as TikTok Shop (Irfansyah et al, 2024).

In terms of economic sociology, this practice can be explained through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. The habitus of thrift merchants who are accustomed to conventional buying and selling practices causes them to be less familiar and reluctant to take the risk of adapting to a new system that is considered complex. Economic capital (access to technology, capital to stock digital goods, live operational costs) and cultural capital (digital knowledge, online communication skills, aesthetics in organizing live shows) play an important role in determining the extent to which businesses are able to optimally utilize TikTok. In the digital arena, merchants with high cultural capital (i.e. those who understand algorithms), have a sense of digital style, and are able to interact in a fast and interesting tempo will be superior in attracting consumer attention.

TikTok Live is not just about selling products, but also creating compelling visual narratives. This is where the digital arena becomes a new field of contestation, where various agents (merchants) compete for consumer attention in a short duration, demanding rapid adaptation to digital trends and changing consumption patterns. However, most actors in Gedebage Market do not yet have enough cultural capital to compete in this arena, so the digital activities carried out are still limited to basic promotions without advanced interactive features such as automatic checkout or the use of digital catalogs. Anthony Giddens' structuration approach also offers a relevant perspective. Giddens argues that structures and

agents are mutually constitutive. TikTok as a digital structure offers a set of rules, opportunities, and constraints (through algorithms, promotional features, monetization systems, etc.). However, this structure is only meaningful when agents (in this case thrift merchants) internalize it in their daily practices. This process has not yet fully happened. Instead of a comprehensive transformation, the use of TikTok Live is still a partial activity that has not been able to shift traditional buying and selling patterns. This phenomenon reflects that the adoption of digital technology is not just a technical issue, but also a cultural and structural one.

More broadly, research in the annual report “e-Conomy SEA” states that Indonesia is the fastest growing e-commerce country in Southeast Asia, with the value of the digital economy reaching USD 77 billion by 2022. However, the penetration of digital adoption remains unequal between large businesses and informal MSMEs (A'yun et al., 2022). Many MSME players have not optimally utilized live shopping platforms due to limited digital literacy, lack of supporting infrastructure (stable internet access, recording devices), and the absence of concrete incentives from the government or the platform. However, the potential for growth remains wide open. Data TikTok's holding company, shows that active TikTok users in Indonesia as of October 2023 reached more than 125 million people (Juned et al., 2023). This makes Indonesia TikTok's second largest market in the world. With that many users, TikTok offers opportunities for market penetration across regions that were previously difficult for micro-enterprises to reach. However, as emphasized in the report, the digitalization of MSMEs must be accompanied by structured training and an adequate supporting ecosystem so as not to create new gaps in the digital economy (Ziółkowska, 2021). Thus, the existence of TikTok live shopping in the Gedebage thrift market environment is not yet massive, but sporadic practices such as those carried out by the @pskidsfashion account show the transformative potential. The challenge is how to bring technology closer to the merchants' culture, not only by introducing new features, but also by building narratives that fit their values, habits, and economic realities.

Challenges and Barriers in Adopting TikTok Live Shopping

Interviews with several Gedebage Market merchants reinforced the finding that the majority of business owners still prefer to sell offline. Informant 2 (John Kanedi) stated that he does not use TikTok or other online platforms because it is too complicated. For him, selling offline is simpler: open the shop, wait for buyers, then close the shop. Informant 3 even said that although a lot of trading is done online nowadays, he deliberately does not follow the trend to maintain market stability (Haryati et al, 2023). According to him, even though income has decreased, he still relies on conventional methods. This statement shows that there is a cultural resistance to digitalization. This is not just a matter of access to technology, but is closely related to perceptions, beliefs, and historical experiences in trading. When viewed through Bourdieu's habitus framework, the preference for traditional buying and selling methods reflects an internal structure that is deeply embedded in the actors. This habitus is shaped by years of direct selling experience, making digital systems unfamiliar and risky. In this case, cultural capital such as the ability to operate devices, understand algorithms, and how to present products attractively in video format, become significant obstacles.

From Anthony Giddens' perspective through structuration theory, the powerlessness of agents in adopting new structures (digital platforms such as TikTok) shows that internalization has not yet occurred in the daily lives of actors. TikTok, despite providing structural opportunities through the Live Shopping feature, has not yet become part of the daily

economic routine. Giddens mentions that structures are only meaningful when they are reproduced through practice. In this context, TikTok's digital structure has not been successfully institutionalized in the Gedebage thrift market environment. In addition to conceptual and cultural challenges, there are also technical barriers. One of the merchants who has used TikTok Live, Dea, stated that TikTok's algorithm is very sensitive to violations, such as the act of smoking while live. If a violation occurs, the show can be stopped automatically by the system. This shows that ignorance or lack of understanding of platform regulations and ethics is an obstacle in optimizing technology. Even for merchants who have tried it, this lack of understanding can impact their continued use of the platform.

This barrier is not new in the context of Indonesian MSMEs. The "Digital Economy Report 2023" notes that the digital divide is still a global challenge, especially in developing countries (Unctad, 2023). In Indonesia, states that around 70% of MSMEs still have low digital literacy, and this is the main cause of the slow adoption of e-commerce, including features such as Live Shopping data from (Tsaqila & Pradikto, 2025). To address this challenge, the Ministry in collaboration with TikTok and Tokopedia launched the "Juragan Jualannya Nyaman" program in early 2025, which aims to provide integrated digital training to micro and small business owners across Indonesia (Susilawati, 2024). Although TikTok claims that more than 5 million MSME players in Indonesia have utilized the Live Shopping feature this figure does not reflect evenly distributed adoption (Priyono & Sari, 2023). Most active users are in urban areas such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Medan. Informal markets such as Gedebage that operate within the people's economy ecosystem face inequality in access, both in terms of infrastructure (internet network, digital devices), and skills. This is reinforced by a report from which states that digital inclusion in Indonesia tends to be concentrated in urban areas and the upper middle class, while micro-economic actors in the informal sector have not been thoroughly reached by the national digitization program (World Bank, 2022). In addition, the double burden faced by thrift merchants is a consideration. Not only do they have to understand how to use TikTok's features, but they also have to manage their stock, pack, organize deliveries, and serve customers online.

This is an added pressure, especially for small merchants who do not have employees or an established division of labor system. In this case, limited economic capital is also a barrier to providing additional human resources or purchasing adequate digital equipment for live streaming (lighting, tripods, high-end smartphones, etc.). Furthermore, the culture of the local community is also influential. In many cases, changes in economic practices often trigger social anxiety. Informant 3, for example, mentioned that he deliberately did not join the online trend so as not to disturb the "market stability". This shows that digital transformation also requires dialogue between traders, not just individual approaches. Without social support or a strong community, those who want to try digitalization may feel alienated or even face resistance from fellow businesses. Thus, the results of observations and interviews show that the adoption of TikTok Live Shopping in the Gedebage Market thrift merchant environment is not only a matter of technological readiness, but also about the complex relationship between digital structures, socio-economic capital, and market culture.

TikTok does open up opportunities as a new digital economic arena, but not all agents have the conditions and readiness to compete in it. The potential for transformation can only be achieved if the supporting ecosystem is systemically strengthened. Therefore, systematic interventions are needed: ranging from local needs-based training, providing affordable digital infrastructure, to strengthening local digital communities so that business actors are not only passive users, but also active and critical economic content producers. When habitus, capital,

and structure meet in a conducive condition, only then can the transformation of the digital economy based on platforms like TikTok reach the people's economic layers in a fair and sustainable manner.

Conclusion

This part The findings of this study reveal that thrift MSME actors at Pasar Gedebage are still in the early stages of utilizing TikTok's *live shopping* feature. TikTok is primarily used for promotional purposes rather than as a main sales channel, with transactions often redirected to platforms such as Shopee or WhatsApp. This indicates that TikTok has not yet been perceived as a strategic component of their business model. Key challenges include limited technical knowledge, inadequate supporting infrastructure, and low confidence in navigating platform algorithms and regulations. These barriers are further reinforced by a strong attachment to conventional trading practices and the perception that digital technology is overly complex. This study contributes empirically to the field of digital economic sociology and highlights the economic potential of technology integration when supported by contextual and needs-based approaches.

In Nevertheless, the main limitations of this research lie in its relatively narrow geographic scope and small number of participants, as well as its qualitative, interpretive nature. These limitations are not due to methodological errors, but rather a consequence of a research design that prioritizes depth over breadth. Future studies are encouraged to further explore the role of peer networks among traders, community-based innovation in technology adoption, and the effectiveness of informal digital mentoring systems. Moreover, comparative research between MSME communities that are technologically adaptive and those that are not in similar market contexts could help identify more effective and contextually appropriate strategies to accelerate digital transformation within Indonesia's informal economic sector.

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