International Conference on Sustainable Economics, Management, and Accounting (ICSEMA 2026)
Proceedings
Vol. 02 Year 2026, 1930 – 1946
ISSN: 3109-3337

RESOLVING THE PERSONALIZATION-TRUST INCONSISTENCY IN DIGITAL ADVERTISING: THE MISSING AFFECTIVE LINK OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ON TIKTOK SHOP

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Article Information: Received: June, 25 2026, ***Published:*** August, 10 2026

Abstract

This study examines how perceived personalization in TikTok Shop ads influences trust through the mediating role of perceived emotional support, grounded in Affective Events Theory (AET). Despite the widespread adoption of AI-driven personalization, empirical findings on its influence on consumer trust remain inconsistent, as prior research has largely overlooked affective mechanisms, focusing instead on cognitive pathways such as relevance and usefulness. This study addresses this gap by proposing that perceived personalization functions as an affective event that triggers positive emotional reactions specifically perceived emotional support which subsequently builds consumer trust. A quantitative survey was conducted with 270 active TikTok Shop users in Indonesia who had been exposed to personalized advertisements, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results demonstrate that perceived personalization has a strong positive effect on perceived emotional support, which in turn significantly influences trust. Furthermore, perceived emotional support partially mediates the relationship between perceived personalization and trust, with a variance accounted for (VAF) of 44.6%, indicating that both affective and cognitive processes contribute to trust formation. Theoretically, this study extends AET into AI-based digital marketing and resolves the inconsistent personalization-trust findings by identifying emotional support as the missing affective link. Practically, the findings emphasize that marketers should prioritize creating emotional support through personalization strategies, as content that makes consumers feel understood and cared for is more effective in building trust. This study contributes to the growing literature on AI personalization in social commerce contexts, particularly in developing countries.

Keywords: perceived personalization, perceived emotional support, trust, Affective Events Theory, TikTok Shop

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed modern marketing through AI-driven personalization, enabling companies to deliver relevant, adaptive, and real-time content based on consumer behavioral data on platforms such as TikTok (Y. Gao & Liu, 2023). TikTok Shop leverages personalization algorithms to present product recommendations tailored to users' viewing history and interactions, creating a highly personal and immersive shopping space (Cai & Suh, 2025; W. He et al., 2021). However, empirical evidence regarding personalization's impact on consumer trust remains inconsistent. Some studies find that personalization increases trust through enhanced relevance and personalized experiences (Tuan et al., 2025; Whang & Im, 2018), while

others indicate that overly accurate personalization triggers negative perceptions that damage trust (Chen et al., 2025; Haj-Salem et al., 2025). This inconsistency is evident in An & Ngo (2025), who found that perceived personalization does not directly influence trust but instead builds trust through cognitive mediators such as perceived relevance and usefulness contradicting studies reporting a significant direct effect (Tuan et al., 2025; Whang & Im, 2018).

This inconsistency suggests that the psychological mechanisms underlying personalization and trust remain unexplained, particularly regarding consumers' emotional responses (Y. Duan et al., 2026). Most prior research has focused on cognitive pathways relevance, usefulness, and information quality (An & Ngo, 2025; Nilashi et al., 2016). However, a purely cognitive approach may be insufficient, as consumers also experience affective reactions that shape attitudes and behaviors (Samson & Voyer, 2012; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). TikTok Shop is an entertainment-driven platform where hedonic motivations and emotional experiences often dominate cognitive deliberation (Cai & Suh, 2025; W. He et al., 2021). In such contexts, emotional responses particularly feelings of being understood and supported may play a more decisive role than functional evaluations.

TikTok Shop's unique characteristics algorithmic For You Page, short-form video, and social commerce features create an environment where emotional connection is paramount. Unlike traditional e-commerce, TikTok users discover products through algorithmically curated content (W. Gao & Liu, 2023). When personalization successfully anticipates consumer preferences, it generates a profound sense of being understood conceptualized as perceived emotional support. This feeling is particularly powerful on TikTok, where the algorithm operates in real-time, creating an intimate interaction (P. Shen, Wan, & Zhu, 2023). Nevertheless, previous studies have often overlooked these affective mechanisms (Deveci, 2025; H. Y. Kim & Lee, 2020).

Indonesia represents a relevant context as one of TikTok Shop's largest and fastest-growing markets (Sriwidadi & Prabowo, 2025). With over 100 million active users, understanding Indonesian consumers' responses to AI-based personalization is crucial. Indonesian consumers predominantly young and digitally native may exhibit different affective responses compared to consumers in developed countries, where privacy concerns are more pronounced (Butt et al., 2022). This cultural distinctiveness makes Indonesia an ideal setting to examine the emotional support pathway of personalization.

This study employs Affective Events Theory (AET) as its primary framework. AET explains that environmental events such as personalized advertisements trigger affective reactions that shape attitudes and behaviors (Christensen et al., 2023; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The AET sequence is: events → affective reactions → attitudes → behaviors. Thus, perceived personalization influences trust through the emotions it elicits. Specifically, this study tests perceived emotional support as the positive affective mechanism mediating the relationship between perceived personalization and trust a pathway overlooked by An & Ngo (2025) and most prior studies. Perceived emotional support refers to consumers' perception that personalized advertisements provide a sense of being noticed, understood, and emotionally accompanied (Liang et al., 2011; Thürmel, 2021). When personalization delivers content matching consumers' needs, individuals feel the platform "cares" about their comfort (A.-Z. He et al., 2021; P. Shen, Wan, & Li, 2023). This fosters a positive affective bond and enhances trust (Tseng, 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). Prior research demonstrates that emotional support from digital interfaces increases trust (Jeon, 2024; J. K. Kim & Lee, 2020).

Two main gaps underpin this research. First, the personalization-trust relationship remains inconsistent, indicating an unexplored affective mediation mechanism. Second, AET application in AI-based personalization on algorithmic platforms remains limited. This study addresses these gaps by examining perceived emotional support as an overlooked affective mechanism. This study offers three contributions: introducing perceived emotional support as an affective mediator, extending AET into AI-based TikTok Shop advertising, and testing this model in a developing country context.

Specifically, this study tests four hypotheses: (1) perceived personalization positively affects perceived emotional support; (2) perceived personalization positively affects trust; (3) perceived emotional support positively affects trust; and (4) perceived emotional support mediates the effect of perceived personalization on trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Affective Events Theory (AET) as the Theoretical Foundation

Affective Events Theory (AET) posits that environmental events trigger affective (emotional) reactions, which subsequently shape individual attitudes and behaviors, following the sequence: events → affective reactions → attitudes → behaviors (Christensen et al., 2023; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Originally formulated for organizational behavior, AET has been extended to consumer behavior and digital marketing, where environmental stimuli similarly evoke emotional responses that shape decision-making (Samson & Voyer, 2012). In the context of AI-driven TikTok Shop advertising, personalized advertisements constitute a salient affective event (Y. Gao & Liu, 2023; P. Shen, Wan, & Li, 2023). Unlike traditional advertising, AI-based personalization creates a highly relevant and contextually situated experience, making the affective event more personally significant and emotionally charged (Bhuiyan, 2024). Consequently, emotional responses elicited by perceived personalization can shape consumers' subsequent attitudes toward the platform.

A key distinction of AET compared to purely cognitive models is its emphasis on spontaneous affective reactions as mediators between environmental events and attitudinal outcomes (Strack & Deutsch, 2004). While cognitive models emphasize rational evaluation of relevance and usefulness (An & Ngo, 2025), AET acknowledges that emotional responses often precede and even override cognitive deliberation, particularly in hedonic contexts such as TikTok Shop (Jeon, 2024; P. Shen, Wan, & Zhu, 2023). This study adapts AET by positioning perceived personalization as the affective event that triggers a specific positive affective reaction: perceived emotional support consumers' subjective feeling that personalized advertisements convey care, understanding, and emotional companionship (Liang et al., 2011; Thürmel, 2021). This positive affective reaction subsequently shapes trust the attitude toward the platform, reflecting consumers' belief that the platform is reliable, honest, and has their best interests at heart (An & Ngo, 2025; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Critically, perceived emotional support represents the affective reaction (transient emotional state), while trust represents the attitude (stable evaluative judgment) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Thus, the AET sequence is operationalized as: Perceived Personalization (Event) → Perceived Emotional Support (Affective Reaction) → Trust (Attitude).

The Effect of Perceived Personalization on Perceived Emotional Support

Perceived personalization is defined as the extent to which consumers feel that advertised content has been tailored to their preferences and behaviors (An & Ngo, 2025; Komiak & Benbasat, 2006). In TikTok Shop, this is realized through algorithms presenting products based on viewing history and interactions (W. Gao & Liu, 2023). Perceived emotional support reflects consumers' perception that personalized advertisements provide a sense of being noticed, understood, and emotionally accompanied (Liang et al., 2011; Thürmel, 2021). According to AET, an environmental event can trigger positive affective reactions if interpreted as supportive of individual needs (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). When personalization delivers content aligned with consumers' preferences, individuals feel that the platform "cares" about their comfort, fostering a positive affective bond (A.-Z. He et al., 2021; P. Shen, Wan, & Zhu, 2023). Prior research confirms that appropriate personalization increases feelings of being emotionally supported (Liang et al., 2011; J. Shen et al., 2025; Thürmel, 2021). In TikTok Shop, where users engage for entertainment and social interaction, the emotional benefits of personalization are particularly salient (Cai & Suh, 2025). Therefore,

higher levels of perceived personalization are expected to generate stronger perceptions of emotional support.

H1: Perceived personalization has a positive effect on perceived emotional support.

Direct Effect of Perceived Personalization on Trust

Trust is defined as consumers' belief that the platform will act reliably, honestly, and without harming their interests (An & Ngo, 2025). Beyond the affective mechanism, perceived personalization may also build trust directly. AET acknowledges that some events may directly influence attitudes without strong emotional mediation, particularly when individuals cognitively evaluate the consistency and competence of the system (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The consistent delivery of accurate and relevant recommendations serves as a heuristic cue for system competence and technological sophistication (Nilashi et al., 2016). Even without intense emotional engagement, consumers can rationally appreciate the algorithm's utility and accuracy, reinforcing their cognitive belief in the platform's reliability consistent with the dual-processing perspective (Samson & Voyer, 2012). Previous research shows that perceived personalization increases trusting beliefs (Tuan et al., 2025; Whang & Im, 2018). Thus, higher perceived personalization is expected to increase trust.

H2: Perceived personalization has a positive effect on trust.

The Effect of Perceived Emotional Support on Trust

High perceived emotional support creates a sense of affective closeness and the perception that the platform has good intentions toward consumers. According to AET, repeated positive affective reactions shape positive attitudes toward the object that triggered them (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). When consumers feel emotionally supported by personalized advertisements, they tend to believe the platform is trustworthy because it has demonstrated attention to their individual needs (Tseng, 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). Previous research demonstrates that emotional support from digital interfaces increases trust (Jeon, 2024). Furthermore, emotional support reduces the uncertainty and perceived risk associated with online transactions (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022). When consumers feel emotionally supported, they perceive the platform as benevolent, enhancing their willingness to rely on its recommendations. Therefore, high levels of perceived emotional support are expected to increase trust.

H3: Perceived emotional support has a positive effect on trust.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Emotional Support

Perceived emotional support acts as a mediator that translates the effect of personalization on trust. AET explicitly supports the notion that affective reactions mediate the relationship between events and attitudes (Christensen et al., 2023; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). When consumers perceive high personalization, they interpret this as the platform understanding their needs, generating feelings of emotional support being noticed, understood, and cared for. These positive feelings build trust because consumers feel the platform has their best interests at heart. In the TikTok Shop context, this mediation unfolds through three sequential stages: First, perceived personalization signals successful algorithmic mapping of consumer preferences (Event); Second, this generates an internal affective state of perceived emotional support (Affective Reaction); Third, this positive state signals platform benevolence, reducing perceived risk and fostering trust (Attitude) (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022). Unlike cognitive mediators requiring conscious evaluation, this affective mediation occurs spontaneously, making it particularly powerful on entertainment-driven platforms like TikTok Shop (Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Therefore, perceived emotional support is predicted to positively mediate the relationship between perceived personalization and trust.

H4: Perceived emotional support mediates the effect of perceived personalization on trust.

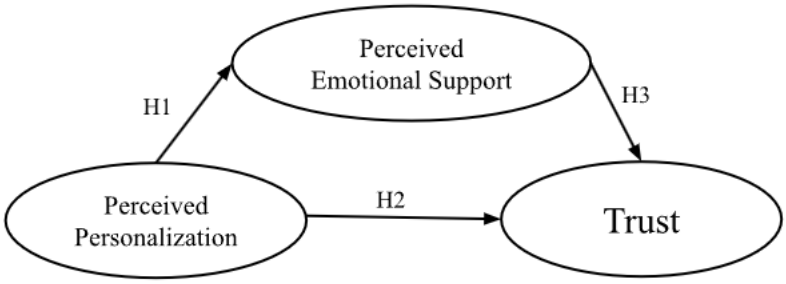


Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative causal-explanatory survey design to empirically test the relationships among perceived personalization, perceived emotional support, and trust within the framework of Affective Events Theory (AET) in the context of TikTok Shop advertisements. The cross-sectional design allowed for collection of respondents' perceptual data to estimate the structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Guntu et al., 2022). This method was selected for three reasons: generalizability to TikTok Shop users in Indonesia, efficiency in collecting data from a large sample, and suitability for testing theoretically formulated causal relationships (Sriwidadi & Prabowo, 2025).

Population and Sample

The population comprised all active TikTok Shop users in Indonesia who had received and viewed AI-based personalized advertisements within the last three months. Purposive sampling was employed with inclusion criteria: (1) active TikTok Shop users who had engaged in shopping or viewed product content at least twice in the past month; (2) had seen personalized advertisements based on their activity history; and (3) willing to participate voluntarily, verified through screening questions (Etikan, 2016). Sample size followed the inverse square root approach (Kock & Hadaya, 2018), with a minimum of 160 respondents based on a pilot test of 30 respondents (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error). To anticipate incomplete responses, data were collected from 270 respondents, exceeding the minimum requirement and satisfying the 10-times rule for PLS-SEM (Hair, Risher, et al., 2019). Respondents came from various regions in Indonesia.

Data Collection and Instrument Development Techniques

Data collection was conducted during April–May 2026 using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Form across social media platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok) and TikTok Shop community groups. The questionnaire included an information sheet (study purpose, confidentiality, voluntary nature), screening questions, and informed consent. Completion was anonymous, took approximately 10–15 minutes, and followed ethical research standards (voluntary participation, right to withdraw, no identifiable information collected).

All measurement items were adopted from previous studies: perceived personalization (4 items) fromAn & Ngo (2025) and Komiak & Benbasat (2006); perceived emotional support (4 items) from Liang et al. (2011) and Thürmel (2021); and trust (5 items) from An & Ngo (2025) and Nilashi et al. (2016). Items were adapted using translation-back translation by two bilingual academics Deviandri et al. (2024), measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). A pilot test with 30 respondents confirmed language clarity and initial reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70), with no items requiring removal.

Table 1. Research Instrument

Variable	Item
Perceived Personalization	1. The AI-powered recommendation system on TikTok understands my needs. 2. The AI-powered recommendation system on TikTok reflects my needs as its own preferences. 3. AI-powered personalized advertising on TikTok is customized to my needs. 4. AI-powered personalized advertising on TikTok provides purchase recommendations that match my needs.
Perceived Emotional Support	1. When I face difficulties in shopping, AI-powered personalized content on TikTok makes me feel supported. 2. When I face difficulties in shopping, AI-powered personalized content on TikTok makes me feel comforted. 3. When I face difficulties in shopping, AI-powered personalized content on TikTok makes me feel understood. 4. When I face difficulties in shopping, AI-powered personalized content on TikTok makes me feel cared for.
Trust	1. AI-powered personalized advertising on TikTok is reliable. 2. AI-powered personalized advertising on TikTok is trustworthy. 3. I can trust AI-powered personalized advertising on TikTok. 4. I am convinced that the products recommended by AI on TikTok are suitable for me. 5. I am confident that I will like the products recommended by AI on TikTok.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4.0, selected for its predictive objectives, mediation testing capability, and robustness to non-normal data (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated for validity and reliability. Convergent validity was assessed through factor loadings (ideal ≥ 0.70; values 0.50–0.70 retained if AVE remained ≥ 0.50) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE ≥ 0.50). Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (≥ 0.70). Discriminant validity was assessed using HTMT (< 0.90) (Henseler et al., 2015). Second, the structural model was evaluated. Path coefficients (β) were estimated using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples; hypotheses were supported if t-statistic > 1.96 or p-value < 0.05. R^2, f^2, and Q^2 were calculated to assess explanatory and predictive power. Demographic variables (age, gender, income, TikTok usage frequency) were included as controls. Third, mediation testing for H4 used specific indirect effects with 95% bootstrap confidence intervals; mediation was significant if the interval excluded zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Tibbe & Montoya, 2022). To address common method bias, non-statistical approaches (anonymity, item separation) and statistical tests were employed. Harman's Single Factor Test (41.01% < 50%) and VIF values (< 3.3) confirmed data were free from serious CMB (Kock, 2017; Podsakoff et al., 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

This study involved 270 respondents, predominantly male (57%) and aged 17–28 (77%), indicating a sample of young, digitally native consumers. Most respondents were students (47%), senior high school graduates (61%), and had monthly incomes below IDR 1,000,000 (46%). Nearly

all were active TikTok users (96%), with 54% using the platform more than five times daily. Fashion was the dominant ad category received (59%), while exposure to personalized TikTok ads was extremely high (97%), with 87% expressing interest in such ads. These findings confirm that AI-based personalization on TikTok Shop has reached and captured the attention of the majority of users. Full demographic details are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Profile

Gender	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Man	155	57%
Woman	115	43%
Total	270	100%
Age	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
17 - 22 Years Old	138	51%
23 - 28 Years Old	70	26%
29 – 34 Years Old	28	10%
35 – 40 Years Old	14	5%
> 40 Years Old	20	7%
Total	270	100%
Education Background	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Senior High School	164	61%
Diploma/Bachelor Degree	103	38%
Magister	3	1%
Doctoral	0	0%
Total	270	100%
Employment	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Student	127	47%
Self-employed	40	15%
Employees	70	26%
Civil Servants	3	1%
Others	30	11%
Total	270	100%
Monthly Income	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
< Rp1.000.000	124	46%
Rp1.000.000- Rp2.999.000	75	28%
Rp3.000.000 – Rp5.000.000	42	16%
> Rp5.000.000	29	11%
Total	270	100%
Active TikTok User	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Actived	260	96%
Not Actived	10	4%
Total	270	100%
Average Daily TikTok Usage Duration	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
1 - 3 Times	57	21%
4 - 5 Times	68	25%
> 5 Times	145	54%

Total	270	100%
Dominant TikTok Advertisement Category	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Fashion	158	59%
Skincare/Beauty	49	18%
Food & Beverages	26	10%
Gadgets/Electronics	17	6%
Health	2	1%
Travel/Tourism	5	2%
Household Furniture	2	1%
Others	11	4%
Total	270	100%
Exposure to Personalized TikTok Ads	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Yes	261	97%
No	9	3%
Total	270	100%
Interest in Personalized TikTok Ads	**Quantity**	**Percentage**
Yes	234	87%
No	36	13%
Total	270	100%

Validity and Reliability Test

All constructs met the required validity and reliability criteria. Indicator factor loadings exceeded 0.60 (mostly >0.70), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.601 to 0.711, all above the 0.50 threshold (Hair, Risher, et al., 2019). Cronbach's Alpha (0.833–0.864) and Composite Reliability (0.882–0.908) both exceeded 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978). The measurement model is thus adequate for structural testing. Complete results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	Items	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceived Personalization	X11	0.828	0.864	0.908	0.711
	X12	0.829			
	X13	0.876			
	X14	0.839			
Perceived Emotional Support	M11	0.825	0.842	0.894	0.678
	M12	0.779			
	M13	0.870			
	M14	0.817			
Trust	Y11	0.636	0.833	0.882	0.601
	Y12	0.767			
	Y13	0.816			
	Y14	0.838			
	Y15	0.804			

Discriminant Validity Test

Discriminant validity testing in this study was conducted using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) approach. The results showed that all HTMT values between constructs were below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Hair, Black, et al., 2019). The highest HTMT value was found between Perceived Personalization (PP) and Perceived Emotional Support (PES) at 0.726, followed by the relationship between Perceived Emotional Support (PES) and Trust (T) at 0.616, and the relationship between Perceived Personalization (PP) and Trust (T) at 0.606. All these HTMT values satisfied the criteria for good discriminant validity, indicating that each construct in the research model adequately distinguished itself from other constructs (Hair, Black, et al., 2019). The discriminant validity test results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test

	PES	**PP**	**T**
Perceived Emotional Support (PES)	0.824		
Perceived Personalization (PP)	0.726	0.843	
Trust (T)	0.616	0.606	0.775

Structural Model Evaluation

Predictive relevance (Q^2) was confirmed for all endogenous constructs (PES = 0.347; Trust = 0.249), indicating good predictive capability (Hair, Risher, et al., 2019). Effect sizes (f^2) showed a very large contribution of PP to PES (f^2 = 1.112), a small contribution of PP to Trust (f^2 = 0.094), and a small contribution of PES to Trust (f^2 = 0.115). R^2 values for PES (0.526) and Trust (0.433) indicate good explanatory power. Among control variables, only daily TikTok usage frequency significantly affected PES ($\beta = 0.152$, $p < 0.05$); age, gender, and income showed no significant effects, confirming the robustness of the main relationships.

Hypotheses Result

All four hypotheses were supported at the 95% confidence level. Perceived Personalization had a strong positive effect on Perceived Emotional Support ($\beta = 0.726$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Perceived Personalization also directly positively affected Trust ($\beta = 0.336$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H2, while Perceived Emotional Support positively affected Trust ($\beta = 0.372$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. The mediation test confirmed that Perceived Emotional Support significantly mediated the PP-Trust relationship ($\beta = 0.270$; $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.180, 0.361]), supporting H4. The Variance Accounted For (VAF) was 44.6%, indicating partial mediation, where both direct and indirect effects contribute to trust formation. Results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypotheses Test Result

Hypotheses	**Original Sample (O)**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**Standard Deviation (STDEV)**	**T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P Values**	
H_1: Perceived Personalization -> Perceived Emotional Support	0.726	0.727	0.028	25.904	0.000*	Significance
H_2: Perceived Personalization -> Trust	0.336	0.335	0.065	5.154	0.000*	Significance
H_3: Perceived Emotional Support -> Trust	0.372	0.378	0.066	5.606	0.000*	Significance

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	
H_4: Perceived Personalization -> Perceived Emotional Support -> Trust	0.270	0.275	0.050	5.438	0.000*	Significance

Note: *P Values < 0.05 is Significance.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that perceived personalization acts as a strong and consistent affective event in shaping consumers' positive affective reactions (perceived emotional support) (An & Ngo, 2025; Thürmel, 2021). This study found that the positive affective route through perceived emotional support had a dominant and significant influence on trust. Internal psychological processes that are positively affective, such as perceived emotional support, have a stronger and consistent effect in driving trust compared to purely cognitive evaluations (Jeon, 2024; Tseng, 2023). In other words, in this research context, the positive mechanism effectively translated personalization into trust. On TikTok Shop, consumers tend to experience the emotional benefits of personalization (feeling noticed and supported), making the affective mechanism work effectively (Samson & Voyer, 2012; Strack & Deutsch, 2004).

Perceived personalization functions as a very dominant affective event in the TikTok Shop context because the personalization algorithm delivers highly relevant advertisement content based on consumers' real-time behavior and preferences, leading consumers to quickly feel that the platform understands their needs (W. Gao & Liu, 2023). In this situation, successful personalization increases feelings of being noticed and emotionally supported, which in turn builds trust (J. Shen et al., 2025). Unlike conventional advertisements that are general and untargeted, AI-based personalization on TikTok Shop creates a more personal and interactive shopping experience, making consumers feel that the platform "cares" about their comfort (A.-Z. He et al., 2021; P. Shen, Wan, & Zhu, 2023). Therefore, perceived personalization in this context does not only serve as a technical stimulus but also as a trigger for layered psychological processes that simultaneously activate positive affective reactions (perceived emotional support) and build trust (Cai & Suh, 2025).

The findings show that perceived emotional support acts as a consistent affective mechanism in shaping trust in the TikTok Shop personalization context. The results indicate that this construct positively and significantly affects trust (Jeon, 2024; Tseng, 2023). This finding can be interpreted as indicating that, in this research context, TikTok Shop consumers in Indonesia—who are predominantly young (77% aged 17–28) perceive personalization as normal and even expected, rather than as a privacy violation. In developing countries such as Indonesia, consumers prioritize immediate benefits such as convenience, relevance, and emotional support over long-term concerns about data use (Butt et al., 2022). Additionally, the characteristics of respondents who are accustomed to TikTok's algorithmic ecosystem make them more tolerant of personalization because they understand that relevant content results from behavioral data collection (W. Gao & Liu, 2023).

The results also show that trust is a central mechanism linking positive affective reactions to purchase intention in the TikTok Shop personalization context (An & Ngo, 2025). Furthermore, the significant mediating role of perceived emotional support confirms that emotional support is the main route for translating personalization into trust (J. K. Kim & Lee, 2020). The VAF of 44.6% indicates that while perceived emotional support serves as a crucial bridge between personalization and trust, a substantial portion of personalization's effect on trust operates through the direct cognitive evaluation of system competence. This partial mediation pattern suggests that trust

formation in AI-based personalization is driven by a combination of affective (feeling supported) and cognitive (recognizing system accuracy) processes, consistent with the dual-processing perspective (Samson & Voyer, 2012). This finding indicates that in an AI-based personalization environment rich with personal data, consumers rely more on feelings of being emotionally supported than on purely functional evaluations. Perceived emotional support plays an essential role in building a sense of security and confidence that the platform has good intentions toward consumers, thereby reducing uncertainty (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022). By positioning emotional support as the core affective mechanism, this study differs from previous research that generally focused only on cognitive aspects of personalization such as relevance and usefulness (An & Ngo, 2025).

The results of this study indicate that the Affective Events Theory (AET) framework operates effectively in the TikTok Shop personalization context (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The empirical findings show that the positive route through perceived emotional support was dominant, consistent, and significantly mediated the relationship. This indicates that the affective reactions predicted by AET emerge with significant strength in this context. Furthermore, this study shows that the context of a developing country with young digital-native users who are familiar with algorithms tends to strengthen the positive affective route (Butt et al., 2022). Thus, this study extends AET into an affective-route model, affirming that in AI-based personalization on TikTok Shop in Indonesia, feelings of being supported are determinative in shaping consumer trust (H. Duan et al., 2026).

The direct effect of perceived personalization on trust (H2) was also found to be significant, though smaller in magnitude compared to the indirect effect through perceived emotional support. This suggests that while consumers do cognitively appreciate the accuracy and relevance of personalization, the emotional experience of feeling supported plays a more substantial role in building trust. This finding is consistent with the dual-processing perspective (Samson & Voyer, 2012), where both rational and emotional pathways contribute to attitude formation, but the emotional pathway is particularly influential in hedonic and entertainment-driven contexts like TikTok Shop.

The findings of this study provide important conceptual implications for the AI-based personalization and AET literature by affirming that perceived personalization is better understood as a value-enhancing mechanism that provides emotional support and comfort to consumers, especially on social media platforms already familiar with algorithmic personalization (W. Gao & Liu, 2023; Sipos, 2025). Thus, the role of personalization needs to be conceptually repositioned from merely an advertising targeting strategy to an emotional support tool that helps consumers feel understood and accompanied in their shopping decision process (P. Shen, Wan, & Zhu, 2023). This repositioning expands the understanding of the affective function of personalization and positions TikTok Shop as a shopping environment that is not only transactional but also emotionally supportive.

This study makes three distinct theoretical contributions. First, it extends Affective Events Theory into the domain of AI-based algorithmic advertising, demonstrating that personalization functions as an affective event that triggers spontaneous emotional responses, thereby offering an alternative to purely cognitive models of personalization-trust relationships (An & Ngo, 2025). Second, by identifying perceived emotional support as the key affective mechanism, this study resolves the inconsistent findings in the personalization-trust literature, showing that emotional support serves as the missing link that translates personalization into trust. Third, by testing this model in the context of a developing country (Indonesia), this study provides empirical evidence that cultural and generational factors specifically low digital privacy concerns and high algorithm familiarity among young consumers strengthen the positive affective route of personalization.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This study examined the effect of perceived personalization on trust through the mediating role of perceived emotional support within the framework of Affective Events Theory (AET) in the context of TikTok Shop advertising in Indonesia. The empirical findings provide strong support for all four hypotheses, confirming that perceived personalization functions as a salient affective event that triggers positive affective reactions specifically perceived emotional support which subsequently builds consumer trust.

The results demonstrate that perceived personalization has a strong and significant direct effect on perceived emotional support (H1) and trust (H2), while perceived emotional support significantly influences trust (H3). Most importantly, perceived emotional support significantly mediates the relationship between perceived personalization and trust (H4) with a variance accounted for (VAF) of 44.6%, indicating partial mediation. This partial mediation pattern reveals that trust formation in AI-based personalization is driven by a combination of affective (feeling supported) and cognitive (recognizing system accuracy) processes, consistent with the dual-processing perspective, though the affective pathway remains particularly influential in entertainment-driven platforms like TikTok Shop.

Theoretically, this study makes three distinct contributions. First, it extends Affective Events Theory into the domain of AI-based algorithmic advertising, demonstrating that personalization operates as an affective event triggering spontaneous emotional responses. Second, it resolves the inconsistent findings in the personalization-trust literature by identifying perceived emotional support as the missing affective link that translates personalization into trust. Third, by testing this model in a developing country context (Indonesia), it provides empirical evidence that cultural and generational factors specifically low digital privacy concerns and high algorithm familiarity among young consumers strengthen the positive affective route of personalization.

Practically, the findings emphasize that marketers should design personalization strategies that prioritize creating emotional support rather than merely achieving targeting accuracy, as personalized content that makes consumers feel understood and cared for is proven more effective in building trust. For the TikTok Shop platform, this implies maintaining deep personalization that fosters emotional connections while providing transparency about algorithmic processes. For regulators, the findings indicate the need for continuous digital privacy awareness education, as low concern about data misuse could become a vulnerability for data exploitation in the future, necessitating a balanced approach that encourages responsible data use while gradually educating consumers about privacy rights.

Limitation and Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged, which also suggest promising directions for future research. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to capture dynamic consumer responses over time, and reliance on self-reported measures may introduce bias, though common method bias was within acceptable limits. The sample's demographic homogeneity predominantly young Indonesian adults restricts generalizability, and the focus on a single platform (TikTok Shop) calls for replication across other e-commerce or social media contexts. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on the positive affective route leaves the negative route (emotional creepiness) unexplored, inviting future investigations into how both routes interactively influence trust. Additionally, trust was treated as unidimensional, whereas future research could benefit from distinguishing between cognitive and affective trust, and as this study did not measure actual purchase behavior, subsequent research should track whether the personalization-support-trust pathway predicts real purchasing outcomes. Overall, advancing this line of inquiry through experimental designs, multi-platform comparisons, cross-cultural studies, and transparency-focused interventions will be critical to balancing the dual affective responses to AI-driven personalization.

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